

FAMOUS 1950s EC COMICS!



NO. 21

OCT



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CANADA

THE VAULT OF

HORROR

FEATURING...



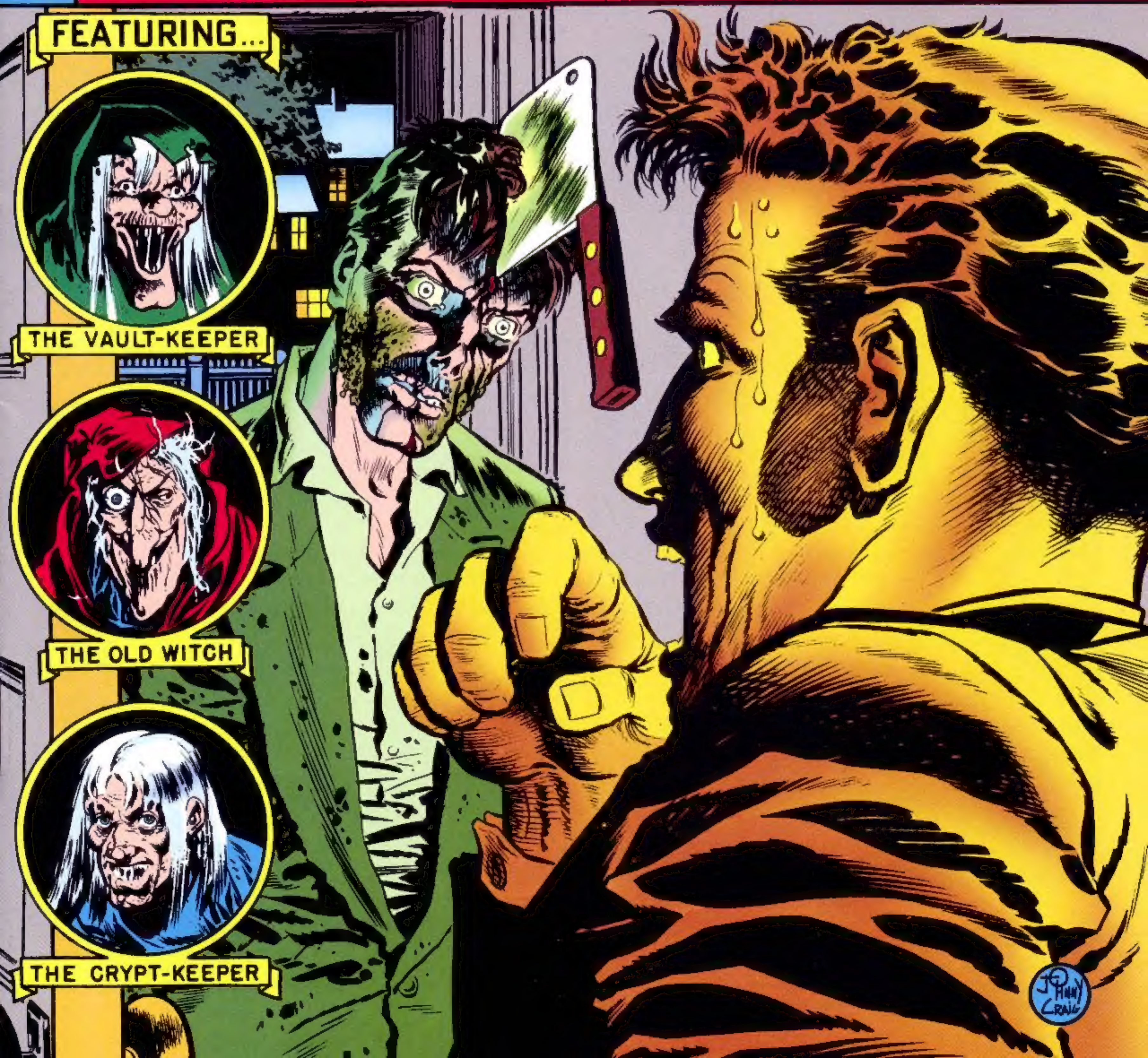
THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



JOHN CRAIG

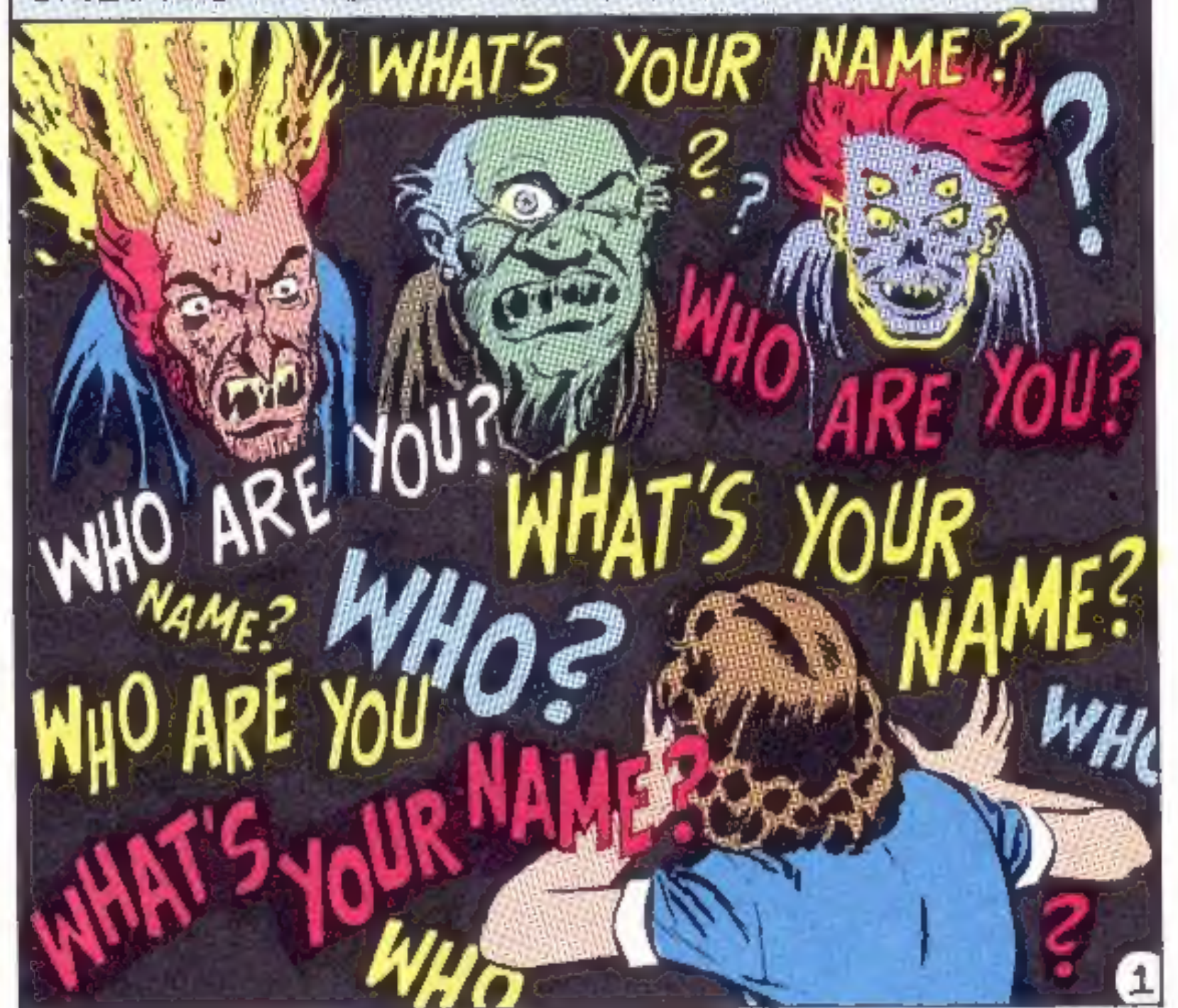
THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! WELL, IT'S TIME FOR ANOTHER FRIGHTENING TALE FROM THE *VAULT OF HORROR*! AS USUAL, I'M JUST *DYING* TO BEGIN, SO TURN OUT THE LIGHTS AND TAKE A DEEP BREATH! THE *BLOOD-CURDLER* I'M ABOUT TO TELL IS CERTAIN TO HAVE YOU ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT, SHUDDERING IN ABSOLUTE *TERROR*! HANG ON TO YOUR *NORMALITY*, OR THIS ONE WILL REALLY HAVE YOU *HANGING* ON THE *ROPE*S! I CALL IT...

WHIRLPOOL



HER MIND WAS WHIRLING AGAIN. THE THREE HORRID CREATURES TOWERED THREATENINGLY OVER HER, HOVERING IN A BLACK ABYSS, AND THEIR QUESTIONS ECHOED AND THUNDERED IN HER EARS, DROWNING HER CRIES AND SHRIEKS FOR HELP...



SHE COULDN'T REMEMBER THINGS! WHO WAS SHE? WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE? WHAT WAS HER NAME? A HUNDRED QUESTIONS... AND SHE COULDN'T ANSWER! SHE DIDN'T KNOW, ANYMORE! SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER!



STILL THE VICIOUS THINGS TORMENTED HER! SHE COWERED AND TURNED HER EYES FROM THEIR LEERING FACES! SHE SWIRLED, FLOATED, THRASHED DESPERATELY IN THE NOTHINGNESS TO GET AWAY... TO *ESCAPE!* AND SUDDENLY SHE SAW THE WINDOW AND WENT CRASHING THROUGH IT...



SHE RAN DOWN THE DESERTED SILENT STREET, THE CLICKING OF HER HEELS URGING HER TO GO FASTER, *FASTER!* THEY WERE AFTER HER, FOLLOWING WITH THEIR CRUEL QUESTIONS, THEIR SHRILL, SCREAMING VOICES...



WOULD SHE EVER ELUDE THEM? SHE POUNDED ON DOORWAYS TO GAIN ENTRANCE, SHE CRIED, SHE RAN AGAIN... *FASTER!* AND THE STREET SEEMED ALMOST ENDLESS...



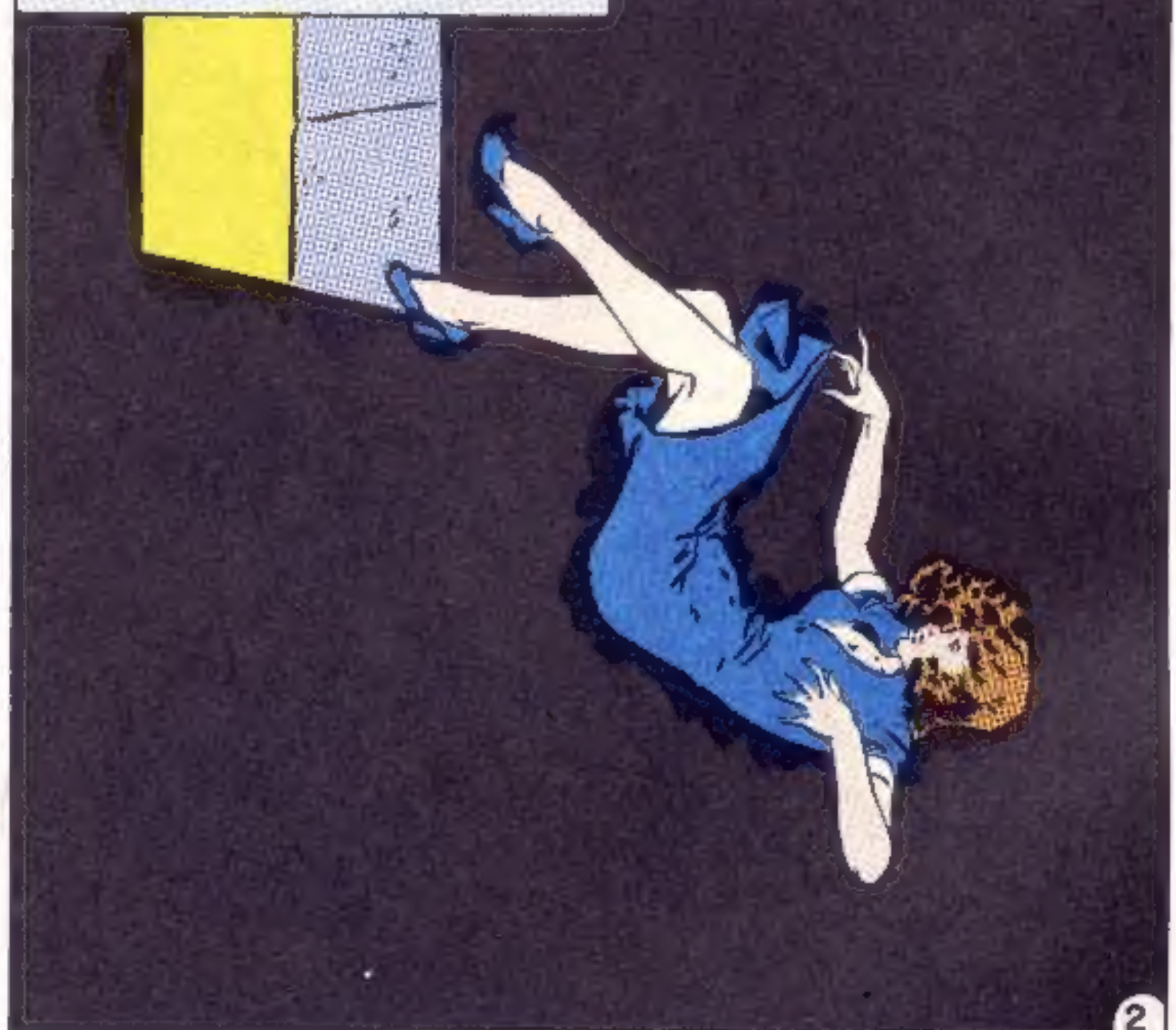
BUT SUDDENLY THERE *WAS* AN END AND THERE WAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO! ANOTHER BUILDING BARRED HER WAY! A BUILDING WITH NO WINDOWS... JUST A DOOR...



SHE SCRAMBLED UP THE STEPS, STUMBLING AND CRYING! SHE SHOUTED AND PLEADED FOR SOMEONE TO HELP HER, CLAWED AND POUNDED FRANTICALLY ON THE DOOR! *THEY WERE ALMOST UPON HER!* SHE HEARD THEIR SCREECHING... AND SHE PRESSED BACK INTO THE SHADOWS, UP AGAINST THE MASSIVE DOOR...



...AND THROUGH IT!



SHE COULDN'T REMEMBER! SHE WAS SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR, SHAKING HER HEAD, TRYING TO CLEAR THE COBWEBS! SHE WAS STILL CRYING, STILL TREMBLING, BUT SHE HAD ESCAPED THOSE AWFUL THINGS! SHE FELT THE HAND TOUCH HER...



ROUGH HANDS DRAGGED HER TO HER FEET. THROUGH A VEIL OF TEARS SHE STARED INTO THE BLAZING EYES OF A FIEND WHO LIFTED HER, SQUIRMING AND KICKING INTO HIS ARMS! HIS LAUGHTER REACHED A NERVE-WRACKING PITCH AS HE CARRIED HER ACROSS THE ROOM...



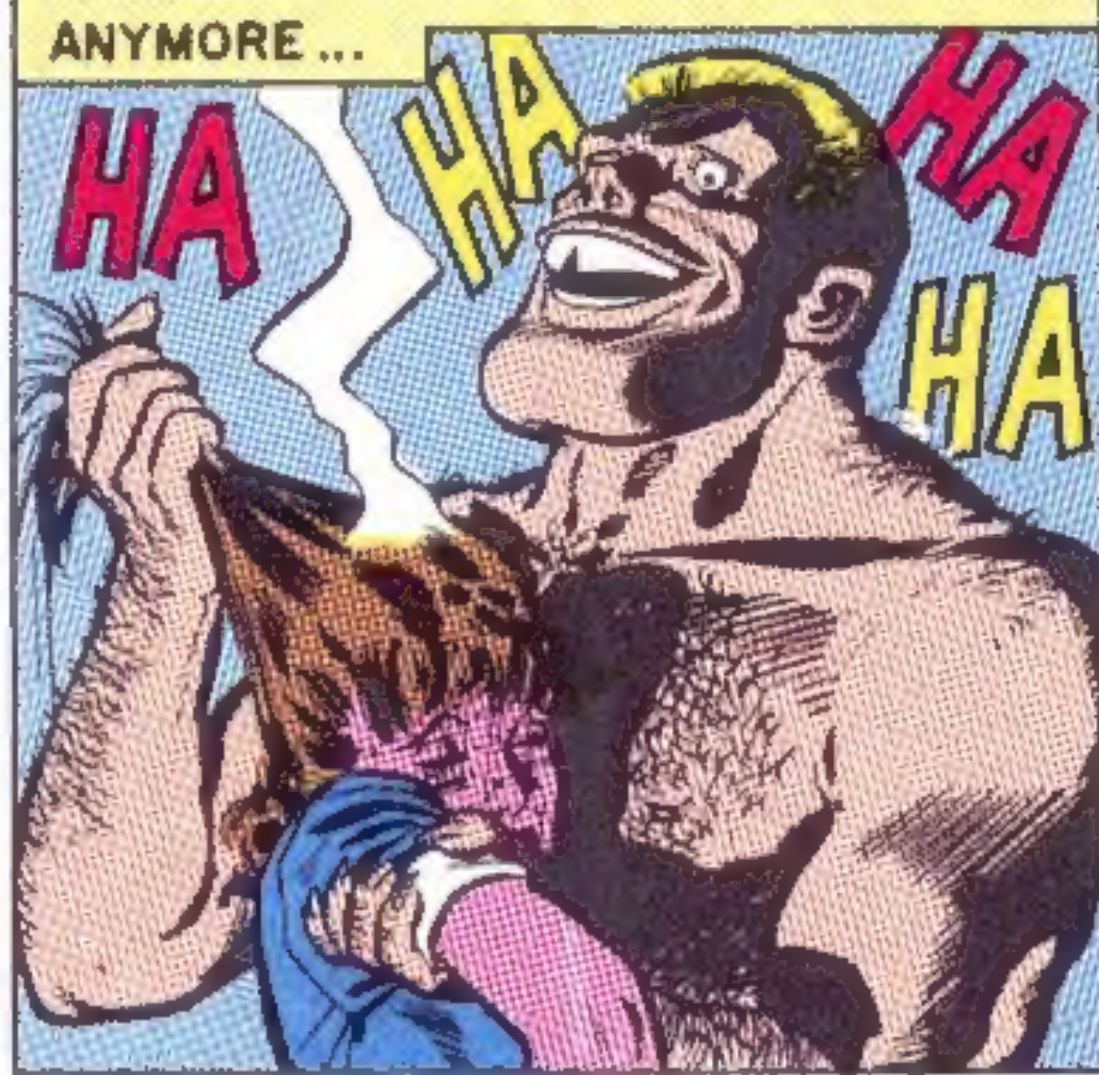
... AND DROPPED HER INTO A CAULDRON OF BOILING WATER!



SEARING PAINS ENGULFED HER! BOILING WATER BURNED HER MOUTH, SCALDED HER THROAT EVERY TIME SHE CRIED OUT, AND SHE THRASHED TORTUOUSLY TRYING TO CLIMB OUT...



SUDDENLY, STRONG ARMS LIFTED HER FROM THE CAULDRON! HER FLESH WAS BEET-RED AND STEAM ISSUED FROM HER SOPPING BODY! SHE COULDN'T STAND UPRIGHT... HER LEGS WOULDN'T HOLD HER ANYMORE...



SHE FELT HERSELF BEING LIFTED... THEN LOWERED. THROUGH A DIM, SEMI-CONSCIOUS HAZE SHE FELT THE COOLNESS SURROUNDING HER, COMPLETELY COVERING HER, SLOWLY DRAWING THE HEAT FROM HER! IT BECAME COOLER, AND SHE OPENED HER EYES, AND THEN, IT WAS *COLD!* IT WAS *MUCH TOO COLD!* SHE WAS SURROUNDED BY *ICE!*



SHE SCREAMED AGAIN AND AGAIN! THE HARDENING ICE NUMBED HER ARMS, HER LEGS! SHE COULDN'T FREE HERSELF, AND AS SHE CRIED CONVULSIVELY, THE TEAR-DROPS FROZE AND HER VISION GLAZED! SHE FELT THE PAINFUL TINGLING IN HER TOES, HEARD THE SHRILL, FIENDISH LAUGHTER FADING... FADING...! MERCIFULLY, SHE FAINTED...



WHY COULDN'T SHE REMEMBER ANYTHING? WHO WAS SHE? WHY WERE THEY TORTURING HER? WHAT DID THEY WANT? WHY DIDN'T THEY LEAVE HER ALONE? A THOUSAND QUESTIONS... AND SHE COULDN'T ANSWER. SHE OPENED HER EYES... TRIED TO MOVE... AND *COULDN'T!*



THERE WAS A SHARP PAIN! ANOTHER! AND *ANOTHER!* SHE SAW A WICKED OLD LADY BENDING OVER HER, CHUCKLING! A LONG, NEEDLE-SHARP HAT-PIN WAS IN HER HAND AND SHE WAS JABBING! *JABBING!* WOULD THERE BE NO END TO THIS? WOULD NO ONE SAVE HER? AGAIN SHE TRIED TO SCREAM... BUT ONLY A STRANGLING SOB ERUPTED ...



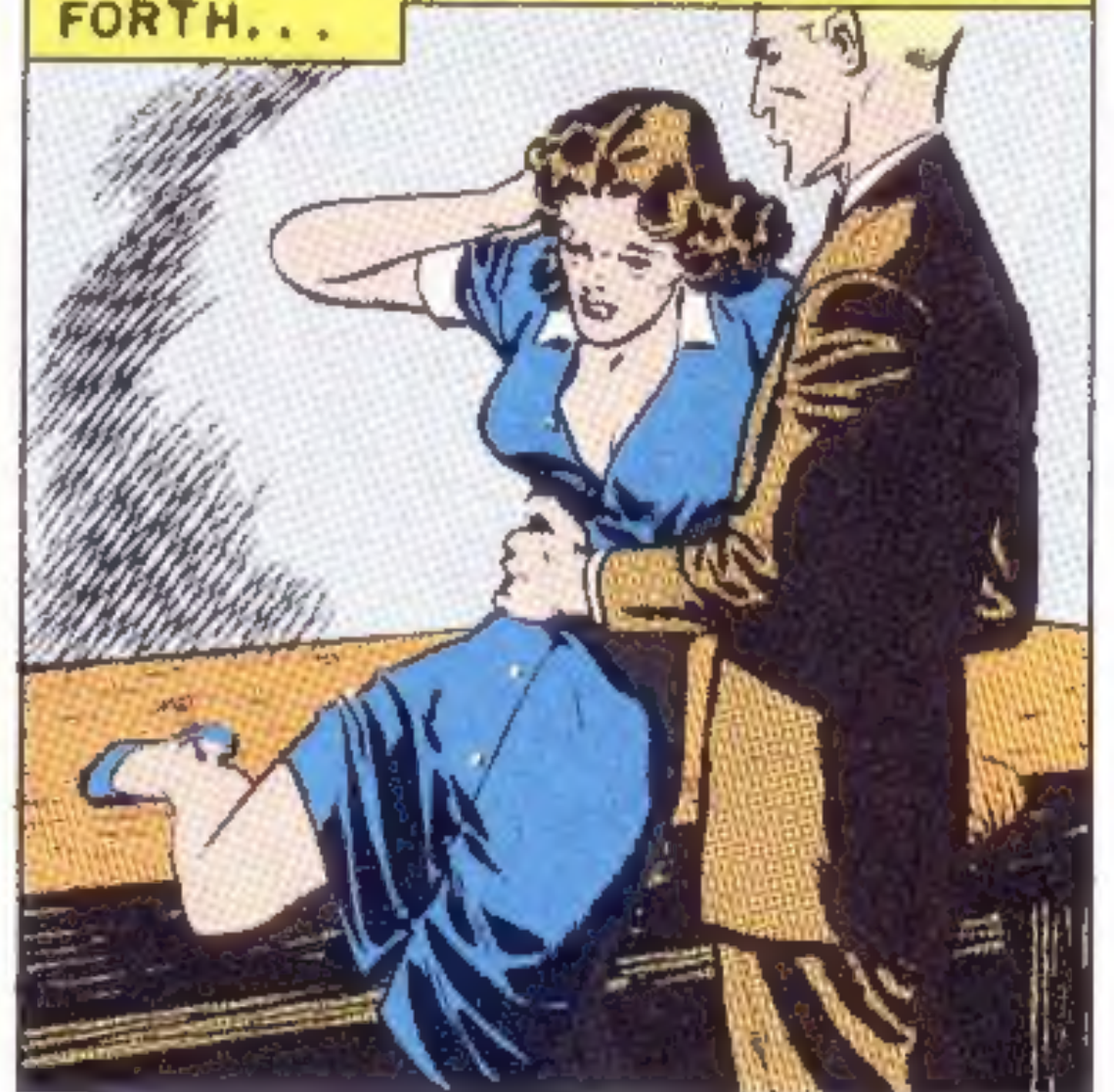
THE JABBING CONTINUED. SHE FELT WARM BLOOD TRICKLE... *WAS* THAT BLOOD? AND EVERY PART OF HER THROBBED AND ACHED. HER HEAD WAS A WHIRLPOOL OF TORTURE...



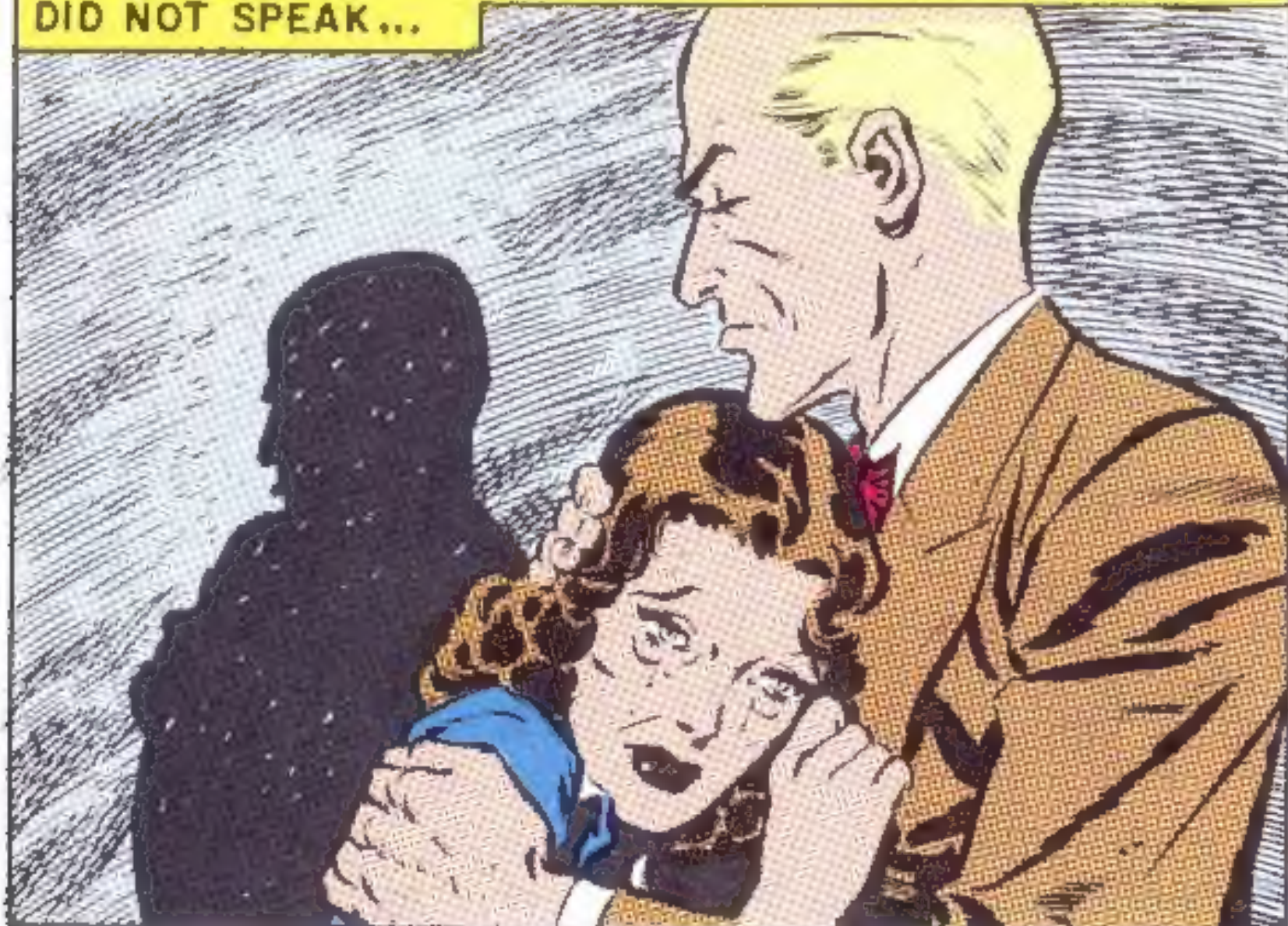
...AND THE JABBING CEASED! SHE OPENED HER EYES. A TALL, SILENT MAN WAS NEARBY, STARING WITH ANGERED EYES AT THE WICKED OLD LADY. HE RAISED HIS ARM... POINTED HIS FINGER... AND THE LADY HURRIEDLY LEFT THE ROOM...



THE MAN UNTIED HER HANDS AND FEET, GENTLY HELPED HER FROM THE TABLE. SHE TRIED TO SPEAK, TO THANK HIM... BUT ONLY GARBLED, UNINTELLIGIBLE SOBS SPEWED FORTH...



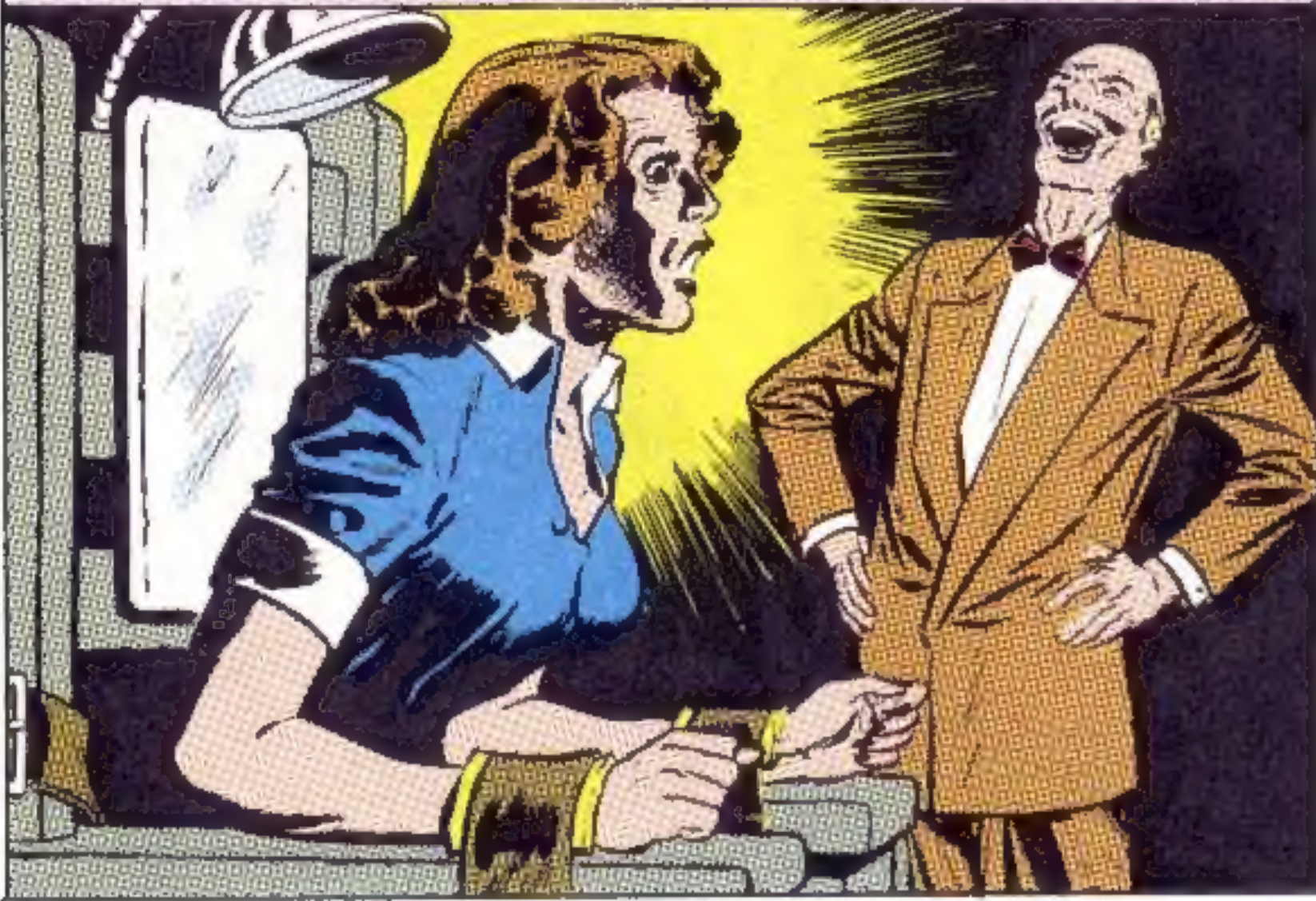
STRONG, TENDER HANDS CARESSED HER HAIR AND FACE. WHILE GRATEFUL, HAPPY TEARS SPILLED DOWN HER CHEEKS, HE RESTED HER HEAD ON HIS CHEST PROTECTIVELY AND NODDED IN UNDERSTANDING. YET, HE DID NOT SPEAK...



BUT WHAT DID IT MATTER? HE HAD SAVED HER, HADN'T HE? WASN'T HE KIND, GENTLE? WITHOUT A WORD, HE HELPED HER CROSS THE ROOM, LOWERED HER EASILY INTO A CHAIR! REST! BLESSED REST! SHE CLOSED HER EYES AND LEANED HER HEAD BACK AGAINST THE CHAIR...



SHE KNEW THIS WASN'T JUST A *NIGHTMARE!* THE PAIN, THE TERROR HAD ALL BEEN *TOO REAL!* IF ONLY SHE COULD REMEMBER HOW, OR WHY, IT STARTED! SHE FELT SOMETHING CLAMP DOWN ON HER WRISTS...TIREDLY, SHE OPENED HER EYES... AND *SCREAMED!*



SHE WAS STRAPPED IN AN ELECTRIC CHAIR! NEARBY, THE SILENT MAN WAS GRINNING INSANELY. HIS EVERY FEATURE WAS CONTORTED INTO A TRIUMPHANT EXPRESSION OF MANIACAL GLEE! HOW HE HAD *FOOLED HER!* SHE PLEADED AND BEGGED FOR SALVATION...UNTIL HIS HAND GRIPPED THE LEVER... AND *PULLED!*



THOUSANDS OF VOLTS SLAMMED THROUGH HER BODY, TEARING AND BURNING...DESTROYING FLESH, BONE, TISSUE! THOUSANDS OF VOLTS PULSATING, COURSEING THROUGH EVERY FIBRE OF HER BEING... MAKING HER TORSO SURGE AND STRAIN AT THE STRAPS THAT HELD HER!



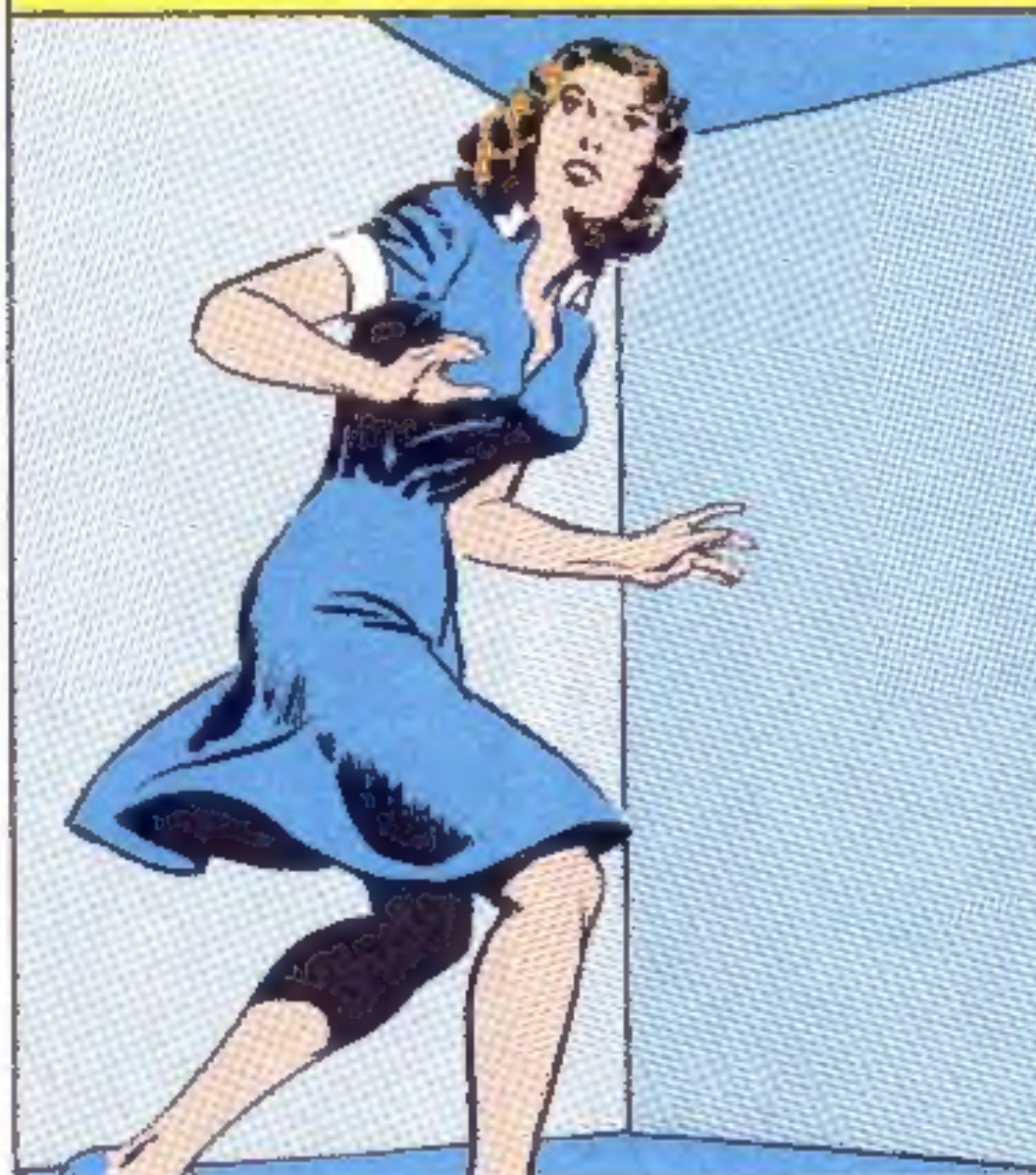
BLACKNESS. PAINLESS, TORTURELESS BLACKNESS. THE EMPTINESS BECOMING SOMETHING. SOLIDITY! A FLOOR? YES! SHE WAS LYING ON A FLOOR SOMEWHERE... AND THE EBONY VOID BECAME SOLID WALLS. FOUR SOLID WALLS, A CEILING AND A FLOOR... BUT NO WAY OUT!



SHE STRUGGLED TO HER FEET AND GROPEd AROUND THE SMALL ROOM, FEELING, TAPPING THE WALLS! WAS THIS THE END? WAS THIS *DEATH?*



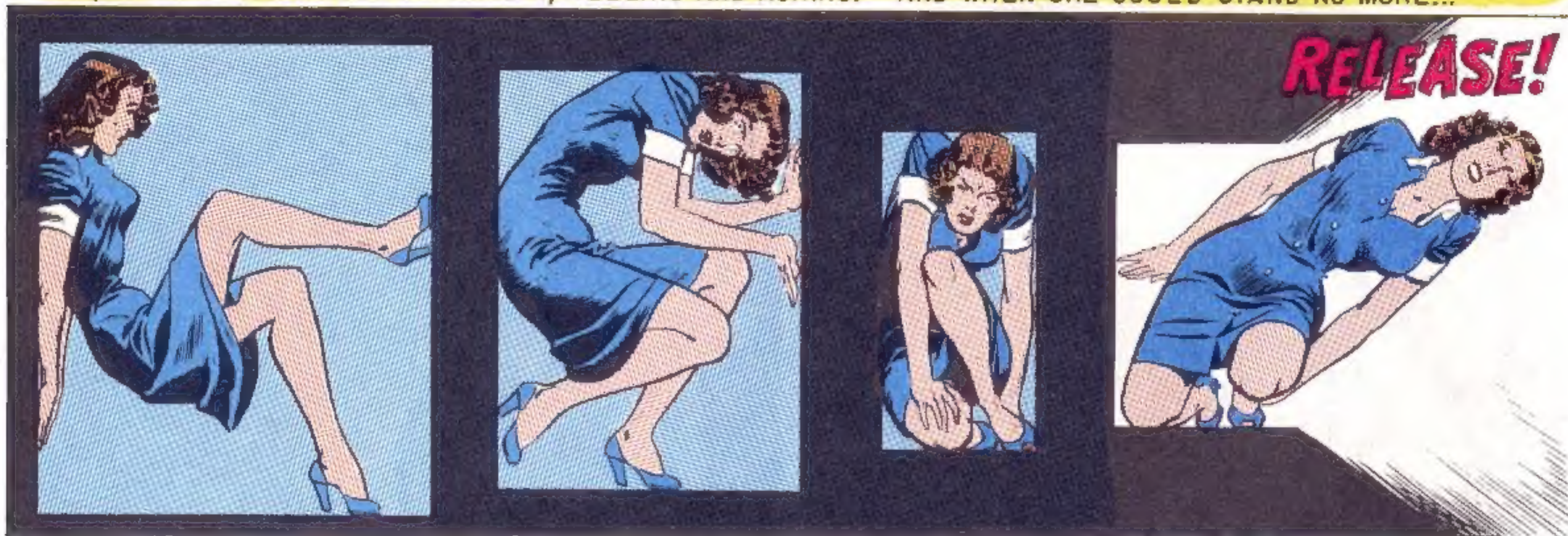
WAIT! WAS HER MIND PLAYING TRICKS ON HER? WAS SHE SEEING THINGS? *NO!* THE ROOM *WAS* GETTING SMALLER! *SMALLER!*



SLOWLY, ON ALL SIDES, THE WALLS MOVED CLOSER TOGETHER! THE CEILING LOWERED, AND THE SIDES NARROWED. SHE STRETCHED OUT HER ARMS TO KEEP THEM AWAY...



IT WAS NO USE! THE WALLS CLOSED FURTHER AND SHE EXERTED ALL HER STRENGTH! THE PRESSURE BECAME MORE INTENSE! SHE GASPED FOR AIR, PUSHED AND HAMMERED THE WALLS, SCREAMED TILL THE REVERBERATIONS HURT HER EARDRUMS! AND STILL THE WALLS PRESSED CLOSER! SHE COULD NO LONGER STAND UPRIGHT! SHE SLUMPED TO ONE KNEE, CRYING, CHOKING, FEELING THE IMMENSE PRESSURE SQUEEZE AND CRUSH HER! DID A BONE SNAP? HER HEAD THROBBED HORRIBLY, REELING AND ACHING. AND WHEN SHE COULD STAND NO MORE...



SHE LAY GASPING AND TREMBLING ON THE FLOOR. A BRIGHT LIGHT INVADED THE ROOM'S DARKNESS... AND IN ITS BRILLIANCE, A MAN STOOD IN THE OPEN DOORWAY...



HE HELPED HER TO HER FEET, COMFORTINGLY LED HER DOWN LONG CLEAN-SMELLING CORRIDORS. WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN NOW? HIS WORDS WERE SO SOOTHING... BUT COULD SHE TRUST HIM? HOW COULD SHE KNOW? WHERE WAS HE BRINGING HER? SHE WAS ALMOST TOO WEAK TO CARE...



SHE WAS IN A ROOM, WARM AND COMFORTABLE. THREE NICE MEN SURROUNDED HER, GAVE HER SOFT WORDS OF CONSOLATION. THEY WERE FRIENDLY... SHE COULD TRUST THEM. SHE CRIED BECAUSE IT WAS ALL OVER...

IT WAS AWFUL! (SOB!) THEY WERE ALL TRYING TO KILL ME! THE ELECTRIC CHAIR... BOILING CAULDRON... THE WALLS! IT WAS AWFUL! AWFUL!

THERE, THERE! WE WANT TO HELP YOU! SUPPOSE YOU TELL US ALL ABOUT IT!



THEY WERE SO NICE. SHE RELATED HER HARROWING EXPERIENCES. THE TEARS OF RELIEF FLOWED DOWN HER FACE, AND THEY LISTENED ATTENTIVELY...

IT'S SO WONDERFUL NOT TO BE AFRAID! MY MIND IS SO CLEAR NOW! FOR AWHILE I... (SOB) I THOUGHT I WAS GOING INSANE!

OF COURSE! WE UNDERSTAND!



GRADUALLY, HER CRYING CEASED. SHE WAS NOT AFRAID ANYMORE. SHE HAD NO *REASON* TO BE AFRAID NOW! ONLY ONE THING BOTHERED HER!

WHY? WHY DID THEY ALL WANT TO HURT ME SO?
WHY?

IT'S QUITE SIMPLE! I'LL TRY TO EXPLAIN...



ALL THIS TORTURE HAS BEEN IN YOUR *MIND*! IT NEVER REALLY HAPPENED AS YOU THOUGHT! SUBCONSCIOUSLY, YOUR MIND TWISTED EVERYDAY OCCURRENCES INTO HORRIBLE TORTURES! YOU *IMAGINED* THAT PEOPLE WERE TRYING TO *KILL* YOU...WHEN ACTUALLY, THEY WERE TRYING TO *HELP* YOU! FOR INSTANCE...



'...YOU SAID YOU WERE PUT IN AN *ELECTRIC CHAIR*! ACTUALLY, ONE OF OUR ATTENDANTS WAS GIVING YOU *ELECTRO-THERAPY*... A FORM OF *SHOCK TREATMENT*!'



'...AND THE *WICKED OLD LADY* WHO JABBED YOU WITH A *HAT-PIN* WHILE YOU WERE STRAPPED TO A TABLE WAS ONLY YOUR *ABNORMAL INTERPRETATION* OF THE NURSE GIVING YOU A HYPODERMIC INJECTION WHILE YOU WERE IN A *STRAIGHT-JACKET*, NECESSITATED BY YOUR DISPLAY OF *VIOLENCE*!'



'THE BOILING CAULDRON AND THE ICE WERE REALLY NOTHING BUT *HOT AND COLD BATHS*...ANOTHER FORM OF *SHOCK TREATMENT*!'



THE POE-LIKE ROOM WHOSE WALLS CLOSED UPON YOU WAS ONLY A PADDED CELL, *ACTUALLY*! SOLITARY CONFINEMENT...BECAUSE YOU HAD BECOME SO *IRRATIONAL*! THE WALLS DIDN'T CRUSH YOU... YOU ONLY *THOUGHT* SO, BECAUSE THE SMALL ROOM WAS SO CONFINING!'



I...I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! YOU'RE *LYING* TO ME! YOU'RE TRYING TO *HURT* ME! OH, WHAT AM I *DOING* HERE? WHERE AM I?

YOU MEAN YOU *STILL* DON'T REMEMBER? MY, DEAR...YOU'RE AN *INMATE* IN AN *INSANE ASYLUM*!



SUDDENLY, THE ROOM GREW DIM, HAZY...

OH-H-H... I (SOB) I REMEMBER! YOU'RE... YOU'RE PERSECUTING ME!

WE'RE TRYING TO HELP YOU! DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR NAME?

THE ROOM FADED AWAY, AND THE THREE DOCTORS SEEMED TO HOVER IN A GRAY MIST GROWING DARKER...

TRY HARD, NOW! TELL US WHO YOU ARE!

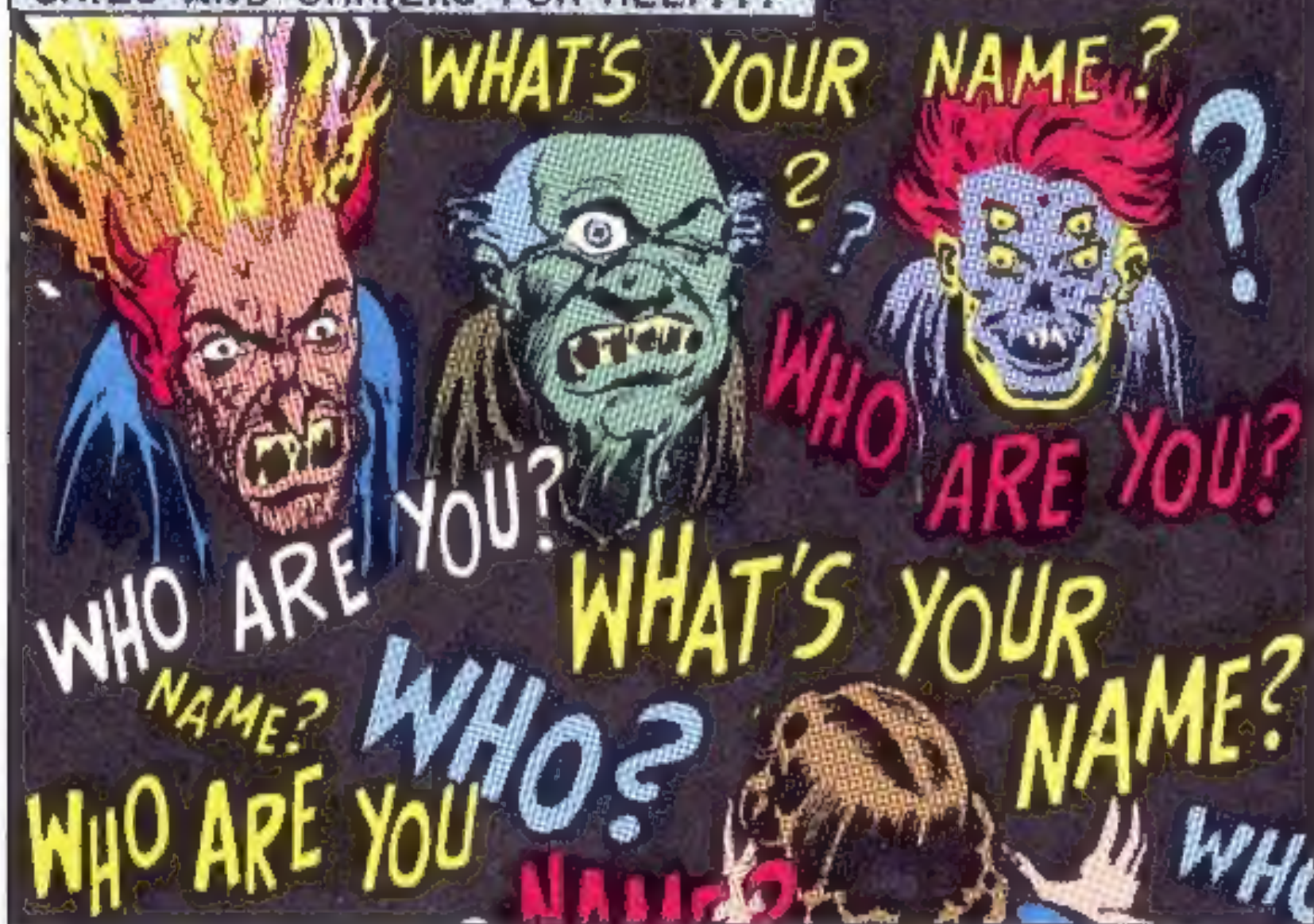
YES! WHO ARE YOU?

WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

IT WAS DIFFICULT TO THINK! HER MIND WAS JUMBLED... THOUGHTS WOULDN'T ORGANIZE THEMSELVES INTO MEANINGS...



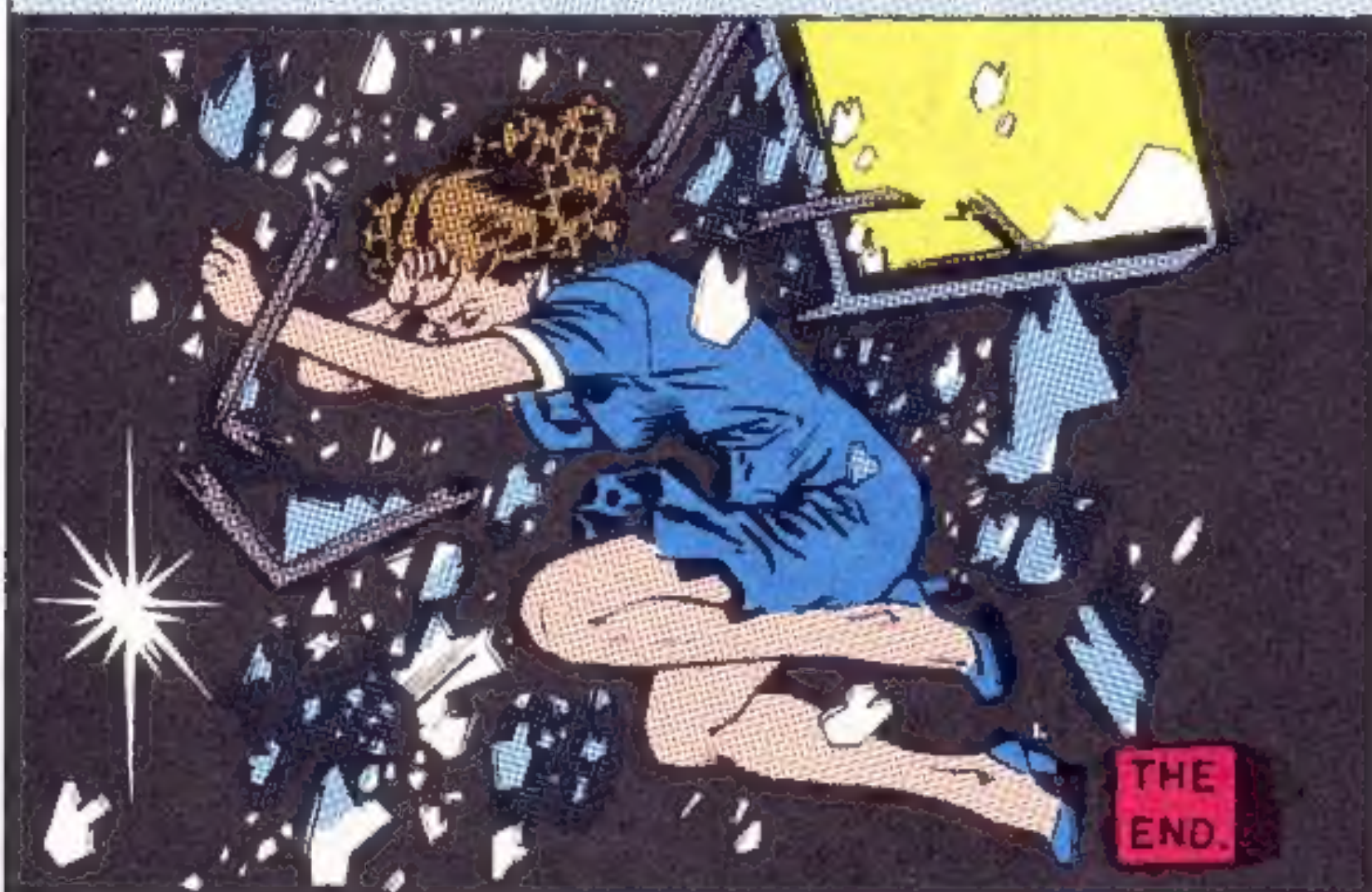
HER MIND WAS WHIRLING AGAIN. THE THREE HORRID CREATURES TOWERED THREATENINGLY OVER HER, HOVERING IN A BLACK ABYSS, AND THEIR QUESTIONS ECHOED AND THUNDERED IN HER EARS, DROWNING HER CRIES AND SHRIEKS FOR HELP...



SHE COULDN'T REMEMBER THINGS! WHO WAS SHE? WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE? WHAT WAS HER NAME? A HUNDRED QUESTIONS... AND SHE COULDN'T ANSWER! SHE DIDN'T KNOW, ANYMORE! SHE DIDN'T REMEMBER!



STILL THE VICIOUS THINGS TORMENTED HER! SHE COWERED AND TURNED HER EYES FROM THEIR LEERING FACES! SHE SWIRLED, FLOATED, THRASHED DESPERATELY IN THE NOTHINGNESS TO GET AWAY... TO ESCAPE! AND SUDDENLY SHE SAW THE WINDOW AND WENT CRASHING THROUGH IT...



HEH, HEH, HEH! RIGHT BACK WHERE WE STARTED, EH? ROUND AND ROUND SHE GOES, AND WHERE SHE STOPS, WHO THE DEVIL CARES! OF COURSE, SHE NEVER DID GO THROUGH ANY WINDOW! IT WAS ONLY HER WAY OF

TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE FACT THAT SHE WAS...

DERANGED? HOPE I MADE THAT PAINFULLY CLEAR! WELL... AS USUAL, THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CLAMORING FOR ATTENTION, SO EYES RIGHT BEFORE HE HAS A TEMPER-TANTRUM, AREADY!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

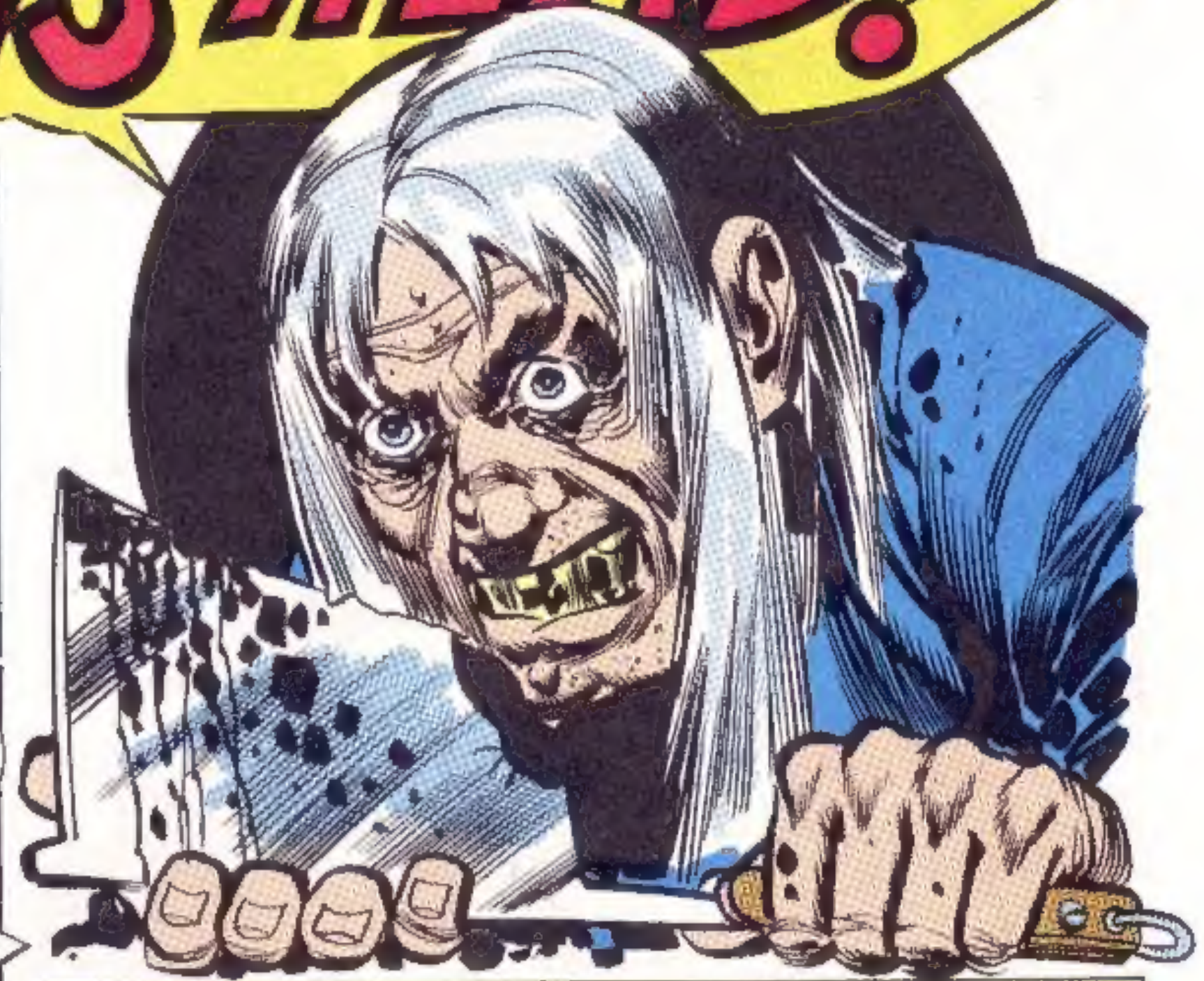
GREETINGS, GHOULS... LET'S DRINK *BLOOD POOLS*! THIS IS YOUR *HOST* IN THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THE *CRYPT-KEEPER*, READY TO LEAD ANOTHER *SCREAM-SESSION* BY NARRATING ONE OF THE *NAUSEATING NOVELLETES* FROM MY *CREEPY COLLECTION* OF *LURID LITERATURE*. SO, HOLD ON TO YOUR *LAST MEAL*! HERE GOES WITH THE *FOUL FABLE* I CALL...

OUT OF HIS HEAD!

THE FAINT WISP OF SMOKE CURLED UPWARD FROM THE DANCING FIRE AND DRIFTED LAZILY OVER THE CAMP-SIGHT. ALEX SLIPPED FROM THE TENT, THE GLEAMING CLEAVER IN HIS GLOVED HAND. THE PERSPIRATION PAINTING HIS FACE GLOWED IN THE FIRELIGHT. HE GRIMACED. STANLEY KNELT BEFORE THE FLAMES, STIRRING THE SMOKE-BLACKENED POT. IN A MOMENT IT WOULD BE ALL OVER. IN A MOMENT, STANLEY WOULD BE DEAD AND ALEX'S PROBLEM WOULD BE SOLVED. HE MOVED FORWARD NOISELESSLY, LIFTING THE RAZOR-SHARP CLEAVER HIGH OVER HIS HEAD...

THE *STEW* WILL BE *DONE* IN A *MINUTE*, ALEX. SMELLS *DELICIOUS*. EVERYTHING *READY...?*

EVERYTHING'S *READY*, STANLEY!



STANLEY STIFFENED AS ALEX'S HIGH-PITCHED VOICE EXPLODED BEHIND HIM. HE WHIRLED... TOO LATE. ALEX BROUGHT THE GLEAMING CLEAVER DOWN WITH ALL HIS FORCE...

ALEX! MY GOD!
YAAA...GGH...

U-UUGH...



JACK PANK

IT WAS QUIET IN THE WOODS THAT SURROUNDED THE HUNTERS' CAMP-SITE. FAR AWAY IN THE NIGHT, AN OWL HOOTED. ALEX STARED DOWN AT STANLEY, CROUCHING AS IF STUNNED... THE CLEAVER SUNK DEEP IN HIS HEAD... THE HANDLE JUTTING UPWARD AWKWARDLY...



ALEX HESITATED, A WAVE OF NAUSEA SWEEPING OVER HIM. STANLEY JUST CROUCHED THERE, AS IF FROZEN... NOT STANDING, NOT FALLING... JUST STARING AT HIM WITH DEAD GLASSY EYES THAT SEEMED TO BURN WITH A FLAME OF SUDDEN UNDERSTANDING.



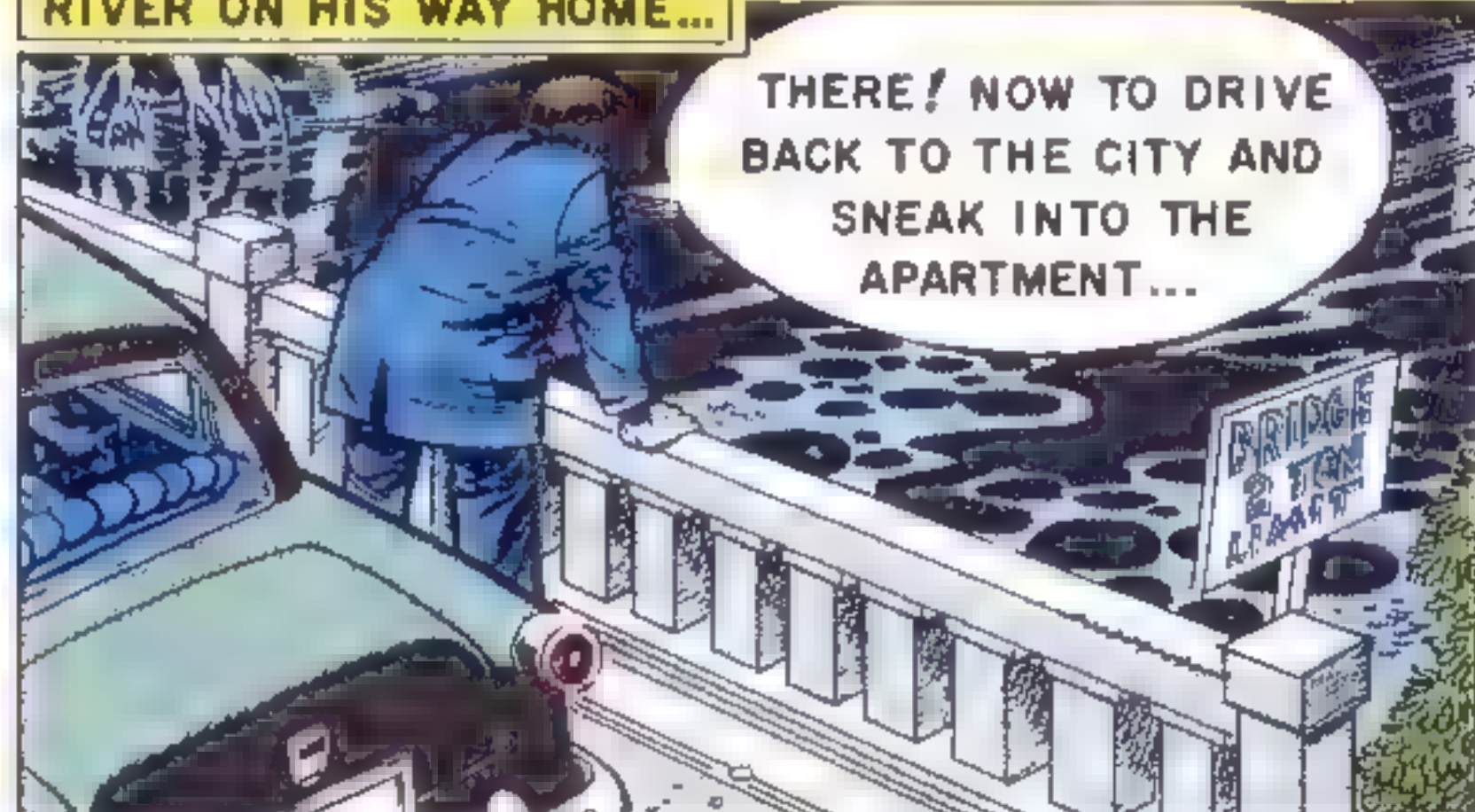
THE HORROR OF IT. THE CLEAVER STICKING UPWARD. THE BLOOD CURTAINING DOWN OVER THE FROZEN SURPRISED FACE. ALEX TURNED AWAY, COVERING HIS EYES. HE WOULD REMEMBER IT ALWAYS... THE HORROR OF IT. BEHIND HIM, HE HEARD STANLEY'S BODY SLUMP TO THE DAMP GROUND...



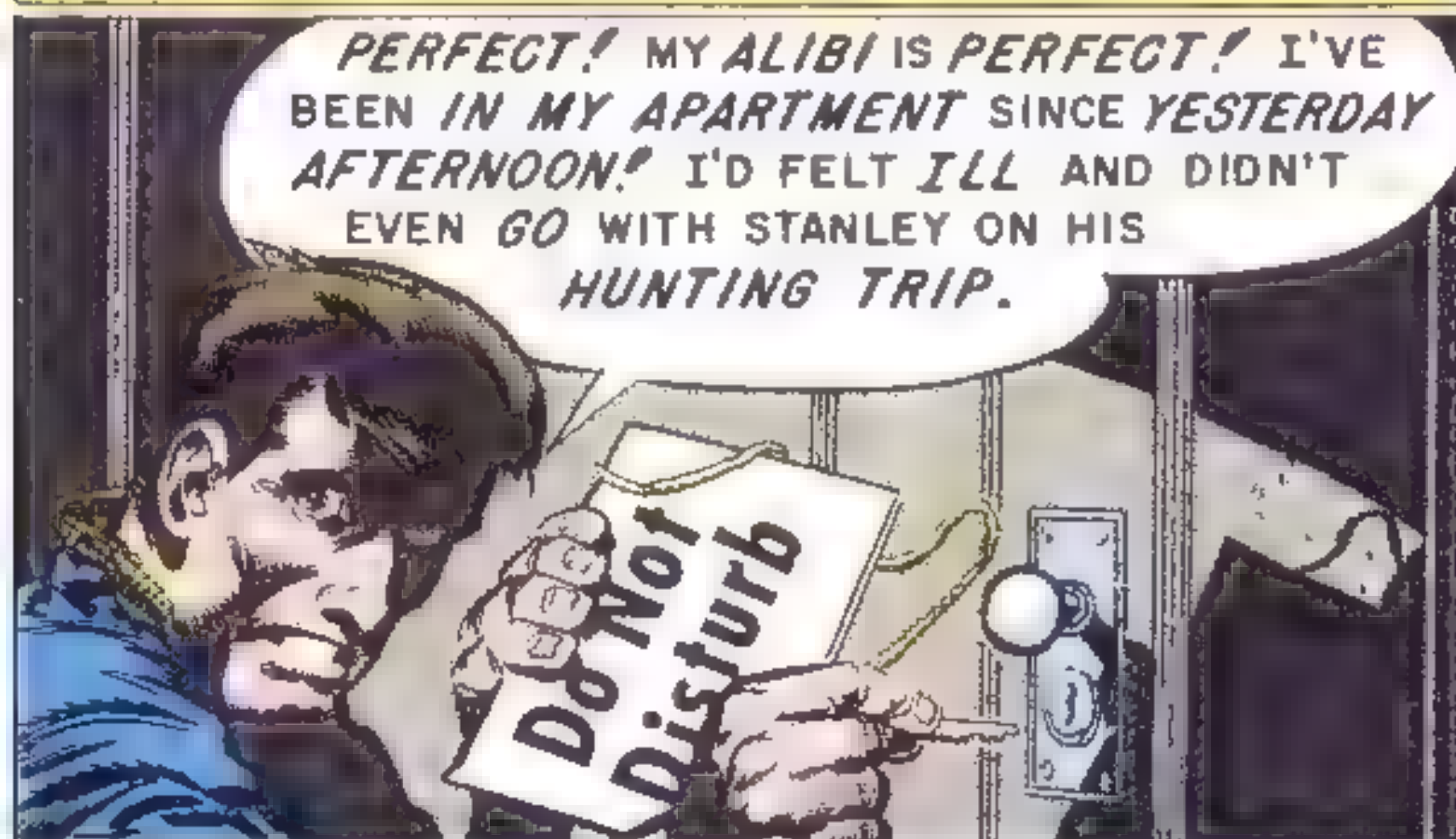
THE HORRENDOUS DEED WAS DONE. LOATHE TO GAZE UPON THE BLOODY REMAINS OF HIS FORMER LAW PARTNER, ALEX MOVED INTO THE TENT, PICKED UP HIS GUN AND THE KNAPSACK HE'D PACKED PREVIOUSLY AND STRODE OUT OF CAMP...



HE TRAVELED SWIFTLY THROUGH THE WOODS, FINALLY REACHING HIS CAR. THE GUN AND THE KNAPSACK AND HIS HUNTING CLOTHES, INCLUDING THE SHOES THAT HAD LEFT TELL-TALE TRACKS AROUND THE CAMP, WERE CAREFULLY DISPOSED OF... ALEX DUMPED THEM INTO A RIVER ON HIS WAY HOME...



ALEX ARRIVED AT HIS APARTMENT BUILDING TOWARD MORNING. HE SLIPPED BACK IN THE SAME WAY HE'D LEFT... THROUGH THE CAVERNOUS CATACOMB-LIKE CELLAR, WHEN HE REACHED HIS PENTHOUSE DOOR, HE QUIETLY LIFTED THE 'DO-NOT-DISTURB' SIGN FROM THE KNOB...



ALEX SMILED. IT HAD ALL BEEN SO SIMPLE. HE SLIPPED THE KEY INTO THE LOCK AND TURNED IT QUIETLY. THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN. ALEX STEPPED IN. THE DAWN LIGHT WAS JUST BEGINNING TO FILTER THROUGH THE HUGE FRENCH DOORS LEADING OUT ONTO THE BALCONY...



THE SILHOUETTE ON THE BALCONY MOVED TOWARD THE FRENCH DOORS... THE EARLY MORNING SUNLIGHT GLEAMING ON THE STEEL BLADE OF THE CLEAVER STUCK IN ITS HEAD...

FEAR AND REVULSION POUNDED DOWN INTO ALEX'S HEAVING STOMACH. HE LIFTED HIS CLENCHED FISTS TO HIS MOUTH, CLOSED HIS EYES AND SCREAMED...

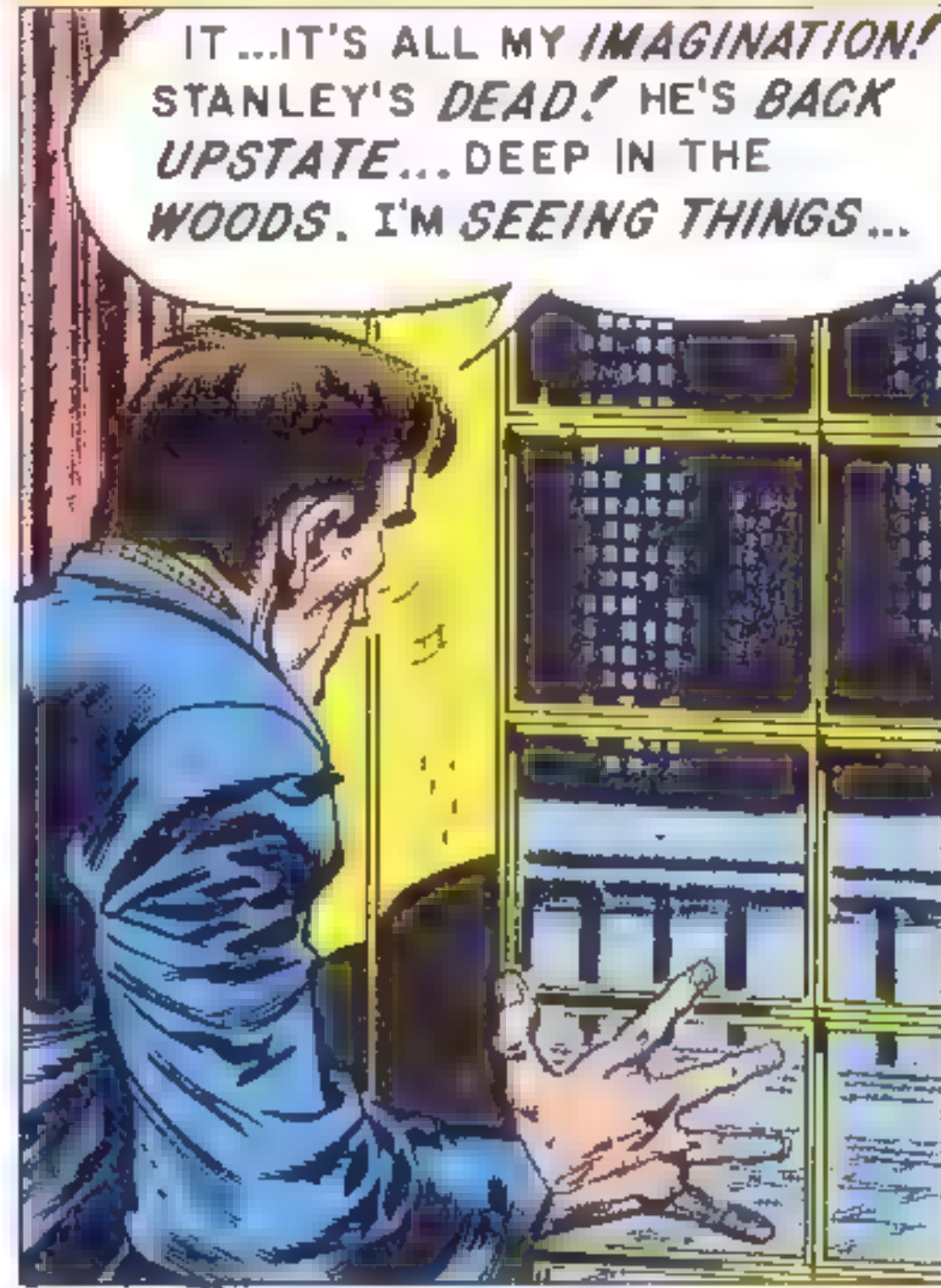
WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES, THE FIGURE ON THE BALCONY WAS GONE. ALEX STARED OUT AT WHERE IT HAD BEEN...SICK...TREMBLING...



MY GOD! STANLEY!
NO! NO!



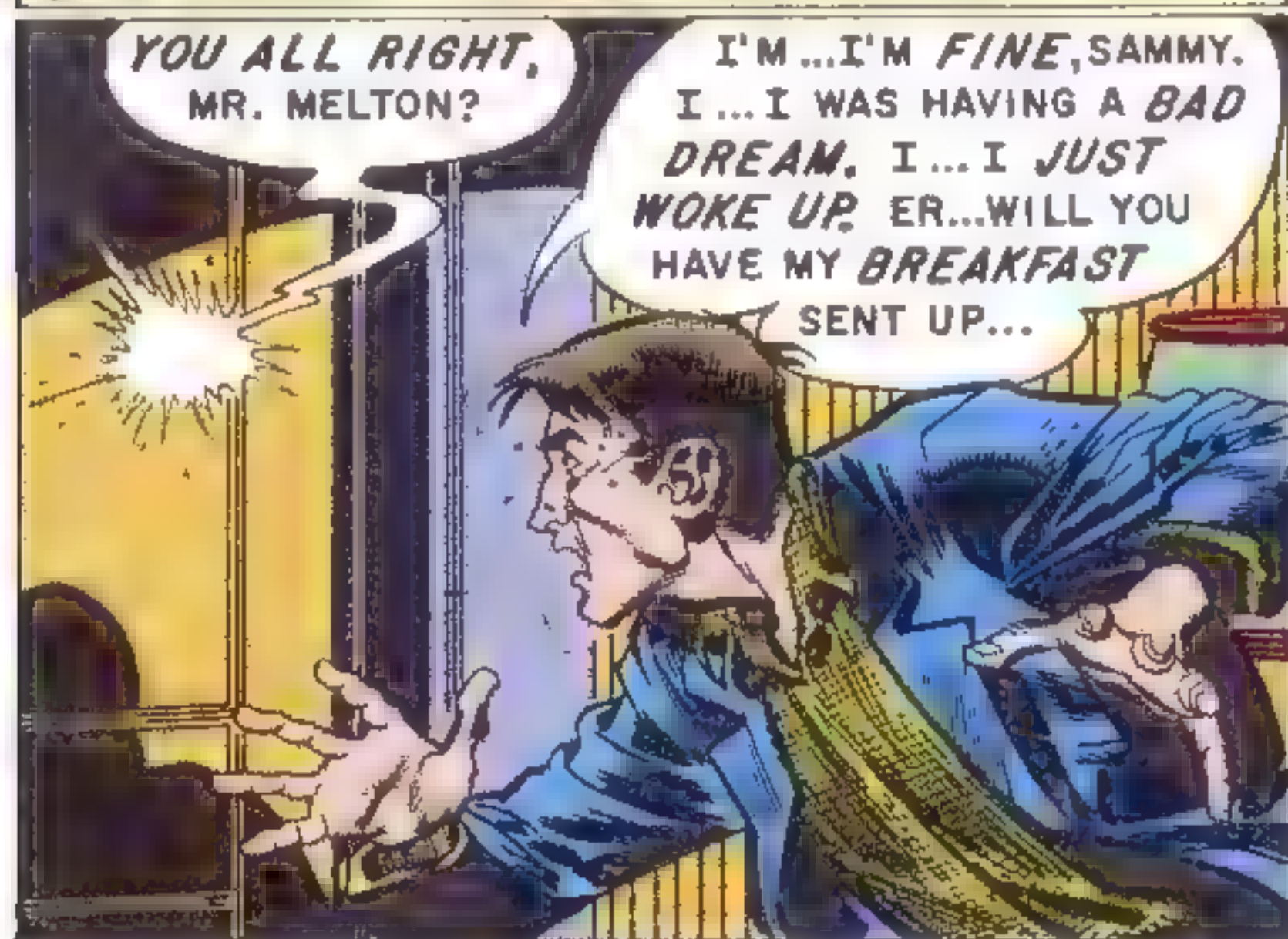
YAAAE EEE E...



IT...IT'S ALL MY IMAGINATION!
STANLEY'S DEAD! HE'S BACK
UPSTATE...DEEP IN THE
WOODS. I'M SEEING THINGS...

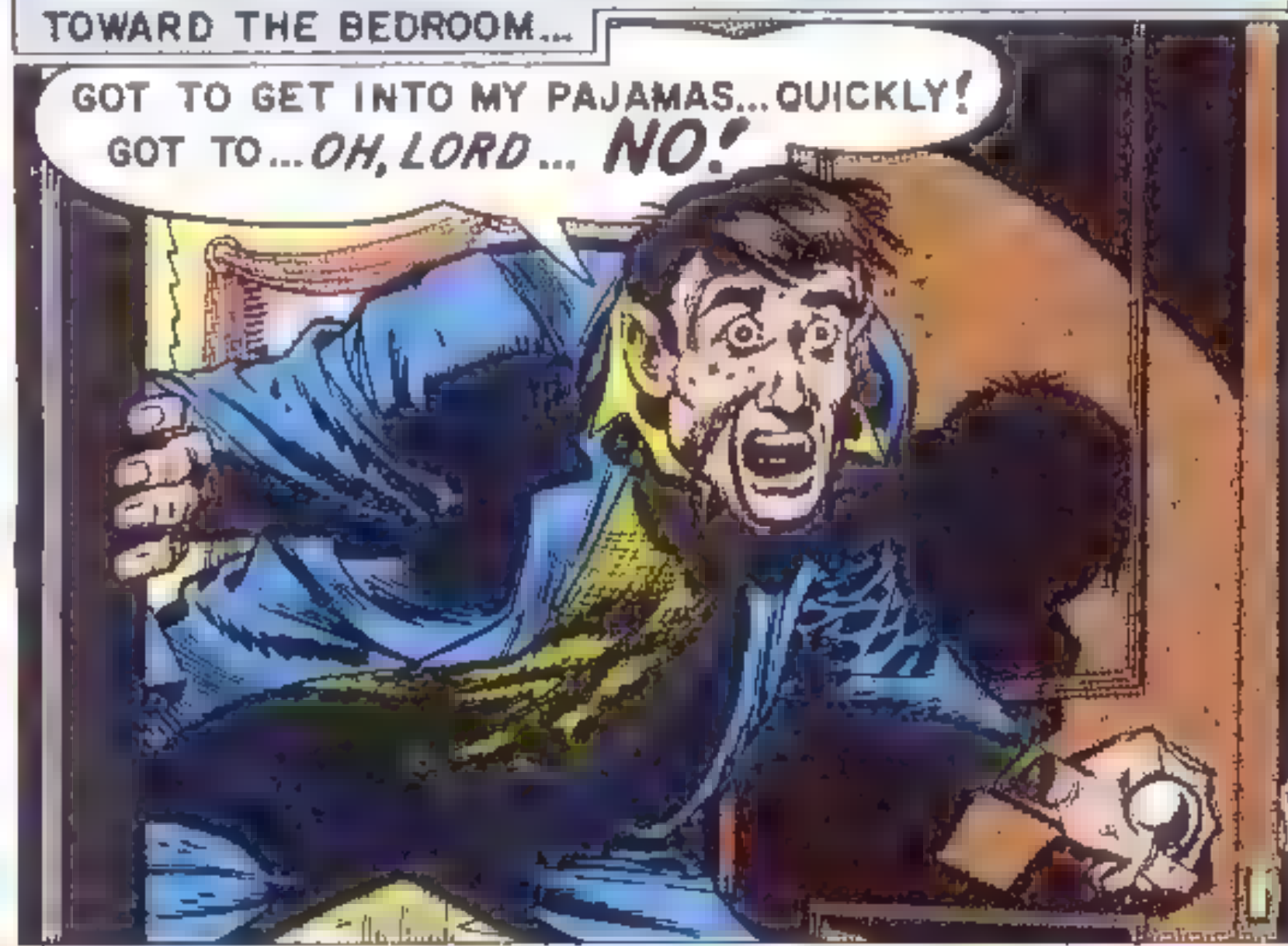
THERE WAS A POUNDING ON THE FRONT DOOR. ALEX SPUN AROUND. A VOICE DRIFTED THROUGH...

ALEX LISTENED TO THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE HOUSE-PORTER FADING AWAY DOWN THE HALL. HE HURRIED TOWARD THE BEDROOM...



YOU ALL RIGHT,
MR. MELTON?

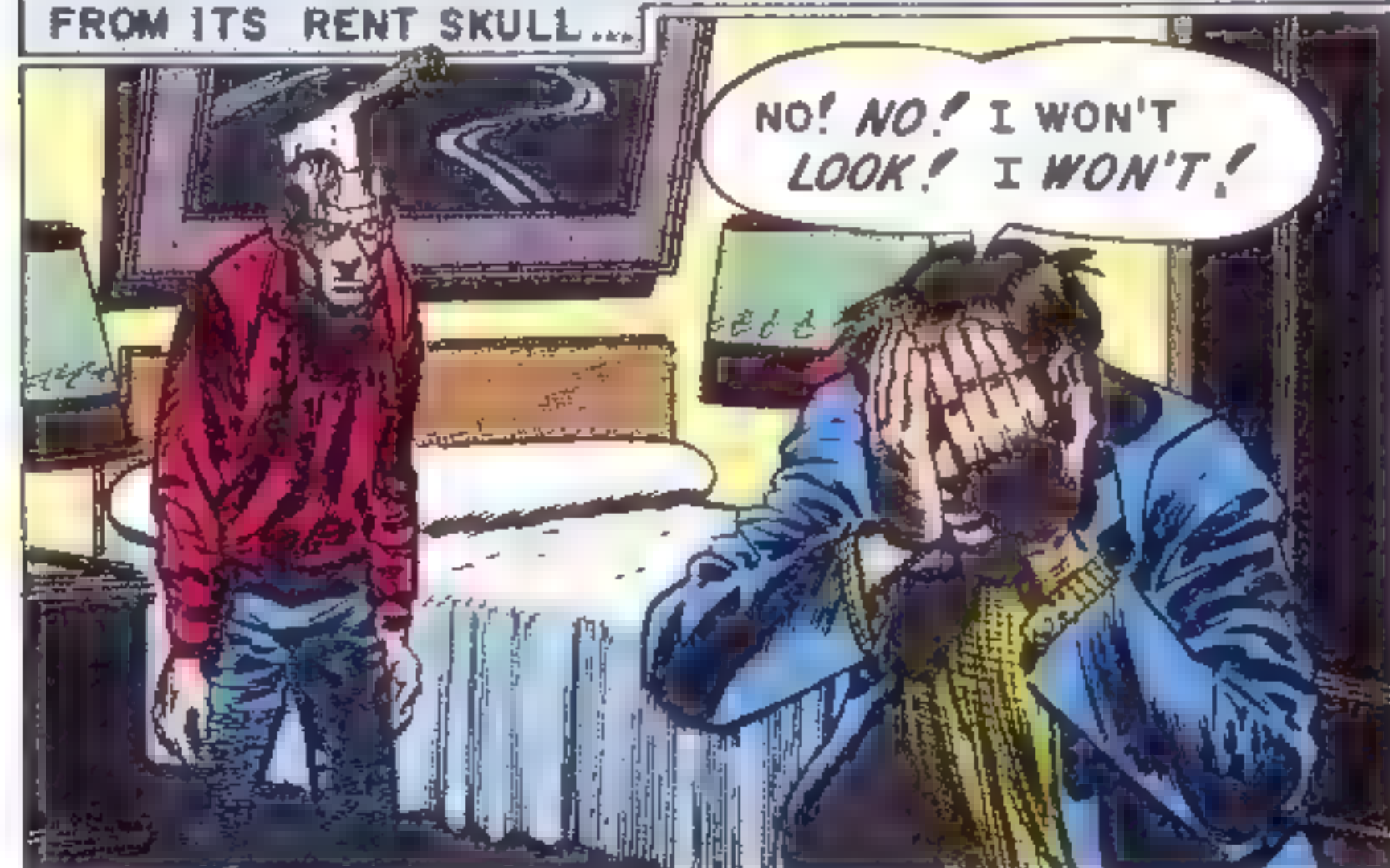
I'M...I'M FINE, SAMMY.
I...I WAS HAVING A BAD
DREAM. I...I JUST
WOKE UP. ER...WILL YOU
HAVE MY BREAKFAST
SENT UP...



GOT TO GET INTO MY PAJAMAS...QUICKLY!
GOT TO...OH, LORD... NO!

THE FIGURE STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE BEDROOM FLOOR...ITS GLASSY EYES STARING OUT FROM THE BLOOD-COVERED FACE...THE CLEAVER STICKING AWKWARDLY OUT FROM ITS RENT SKULL...

ALEX COVERED HIS EYES, SHUTTING OUT THE HORRIBLE SIGHT. AND WHEN HE OPENED THEM AGAIN, THE FIGURE WAS GONE...

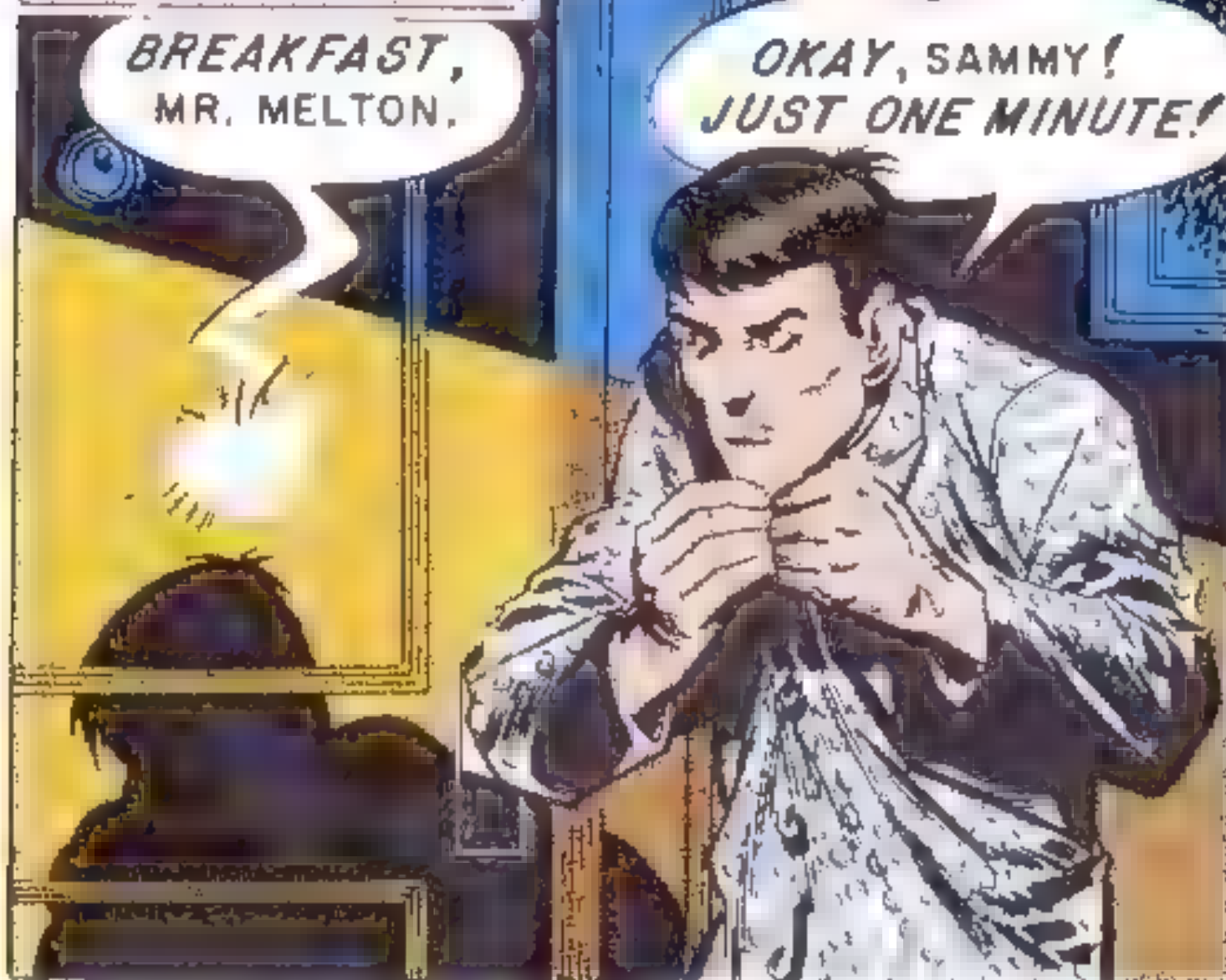


NO! NO! I WON'T
LOOK! I WON'T!

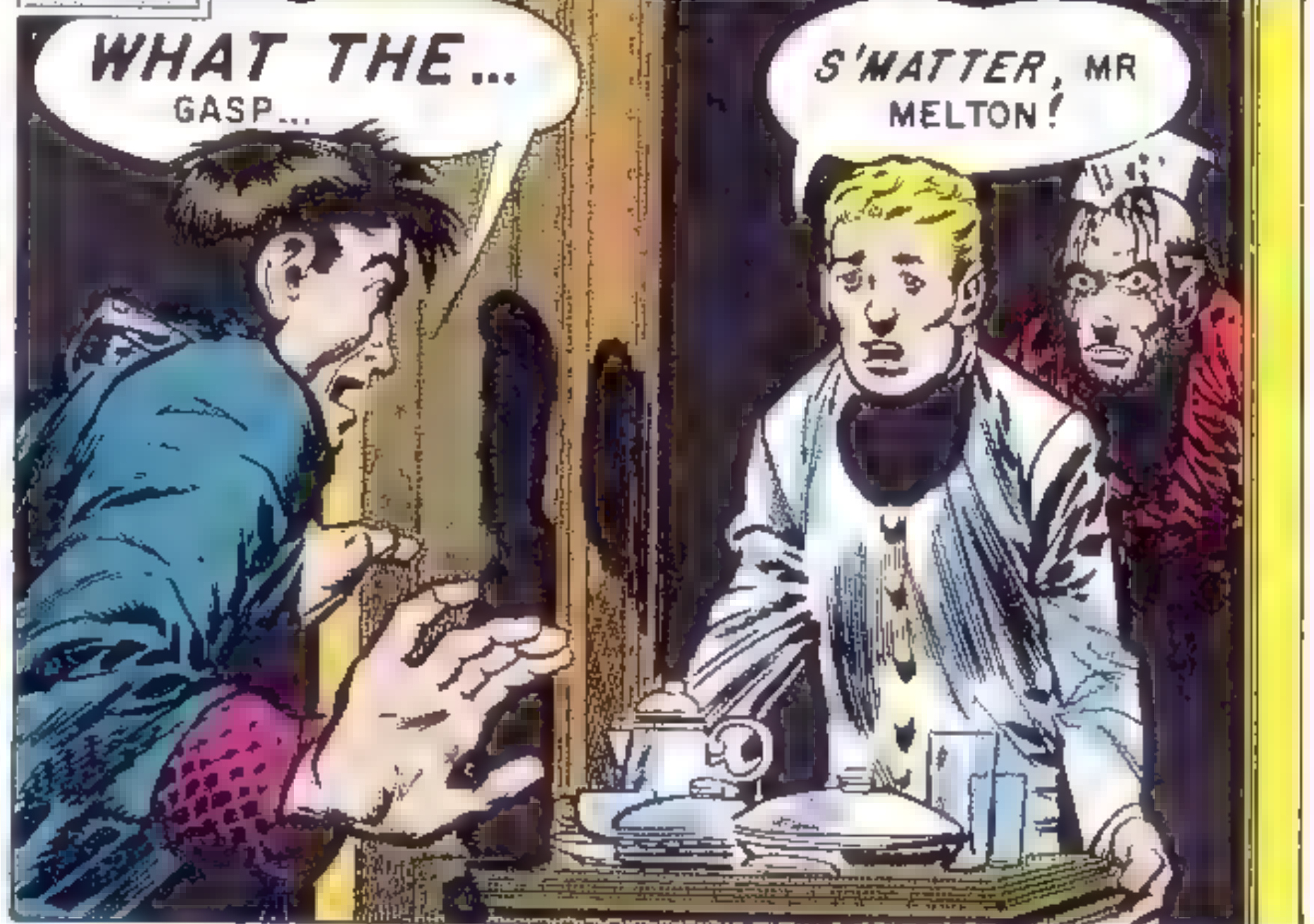


TH-THAT'S BETTER! I...I'VE
GOT TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER.
MY NERVES ARE SHOT...

ALEX UNDRESSED QUICKLY AND SLIPPED INTO HIS PAJAMAS. HE'D JUST FINISHED BUTTONING THEM WHEN THE KNOCK ON THE DOOR ANNOUNCED SAMMY'S RETURN...



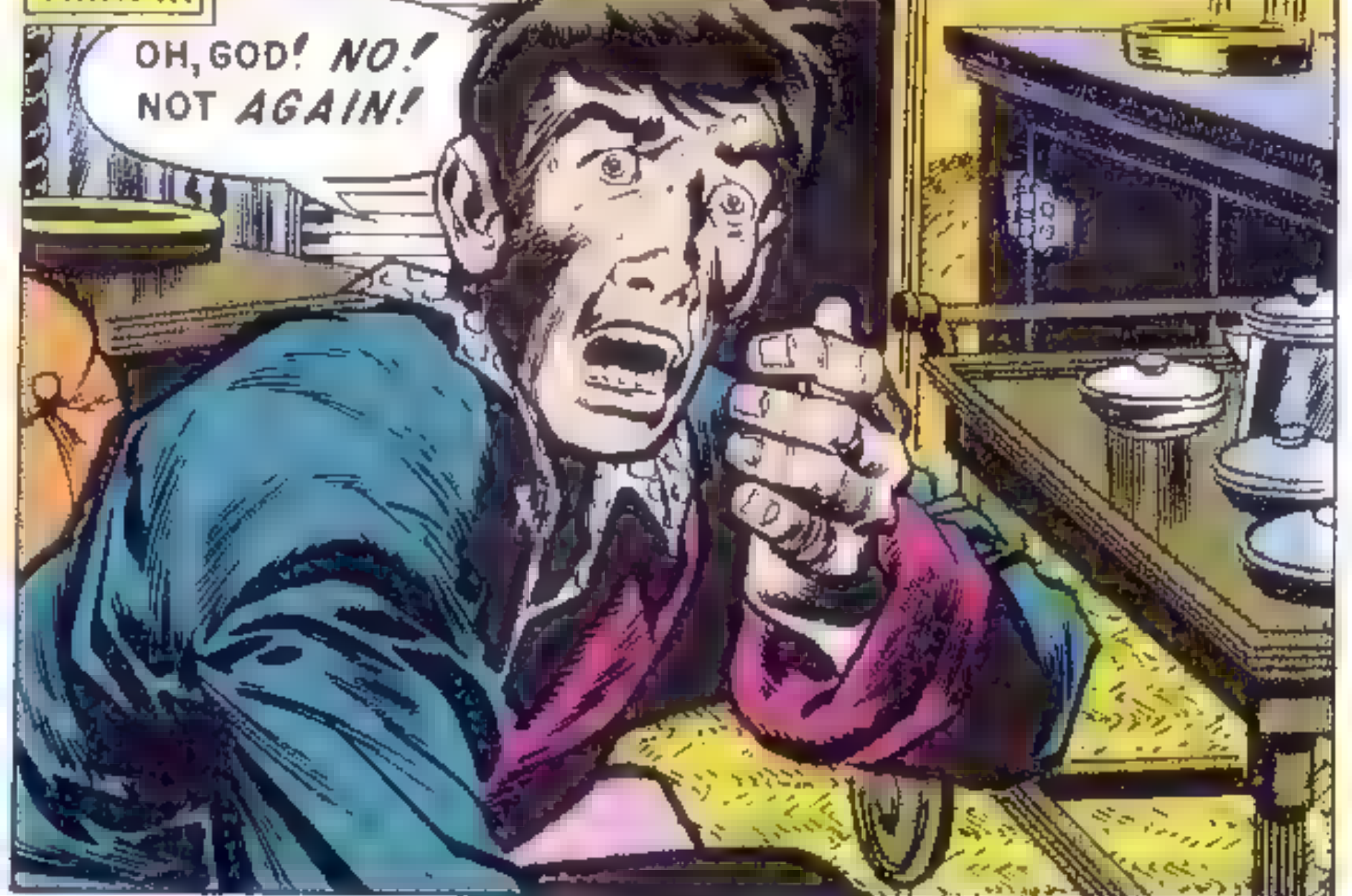
ALEX SLIPPED INTO A DRESSING-ROBE AND OPENED THE DOOR...



THE FIGURE STOOD BEHIND SAMMY, GRINNING...ITS EYES WIDE AND BURNING...ITS HEAD TILTED CRAZILY AS IF THE CLEAVER IMBEDDED THERE WAS TOO HEAVY. ALEX CLOSED HIS EYES, TURNING AWAY...



AFTER THE HOUSE-PORTER LEFT, ALEX SAT DOWN AND STARED AT THE UNAPPETIZING FOOD. THERE WAS NO HUNGER IN HIM... NO DESIRE TO EAT. HE'D ONLY ORDERED THE FOOD TO ESTABLISH HIS ALIBI. HE RETCHED AND LOOKED AWAY...



IT STOOD THERE... BLOODY... SWAYING... ITS EYES BULGING... ITS TEETH BARED IN A DEATH-GRIN...



ALEX JAMMED HIS EYES SHUT. WHEN HE OPENED THEM, THE APPARITION WAS GONE...



HE STAGGERED ACROSS THE HUGE LUXURIOUS LIVING-ROOM TO THE WELL-APPOINTED BAR. THE GURG-LING WHISKEY POURING INTO THE GLASS SOUNDED LIKE DISTANT LAUGHTER...



AS HE LIFTED THE GLASS TO HIS LIPS, THE FIGURE STOOD BEFORE HIM... GROTESQUE .. APPALLING .. SICKENING ..



THE LIQUOR BOTTLE SMASHED ON THE POLISHED HARDWOOD FLOOR. ALEX SHUT HIS EYES...



HE OPENED HIS EYES. THE FIGURE GRINNED AT HIM... STUPIDLY BLOODY ...THE SHINING CLEAVER WEDGED DEEP IN ITS SKULL...



HE SHUT HIS EYES AGAIN, SHUTTING OUT THE AWFUL SIGHT...



ONE MINUTE PASSED. TWO. ALEX OPENED ONE EYE...



HE CLAMPED THE EYE SHUT AGAIN, WITH HIS EYES SHUT, HE COULDN'T SEE THE HORRIBLE SIGHT. WITH HIS EYES SHUT, HE WAS FREE OF IT. HE WAITED...



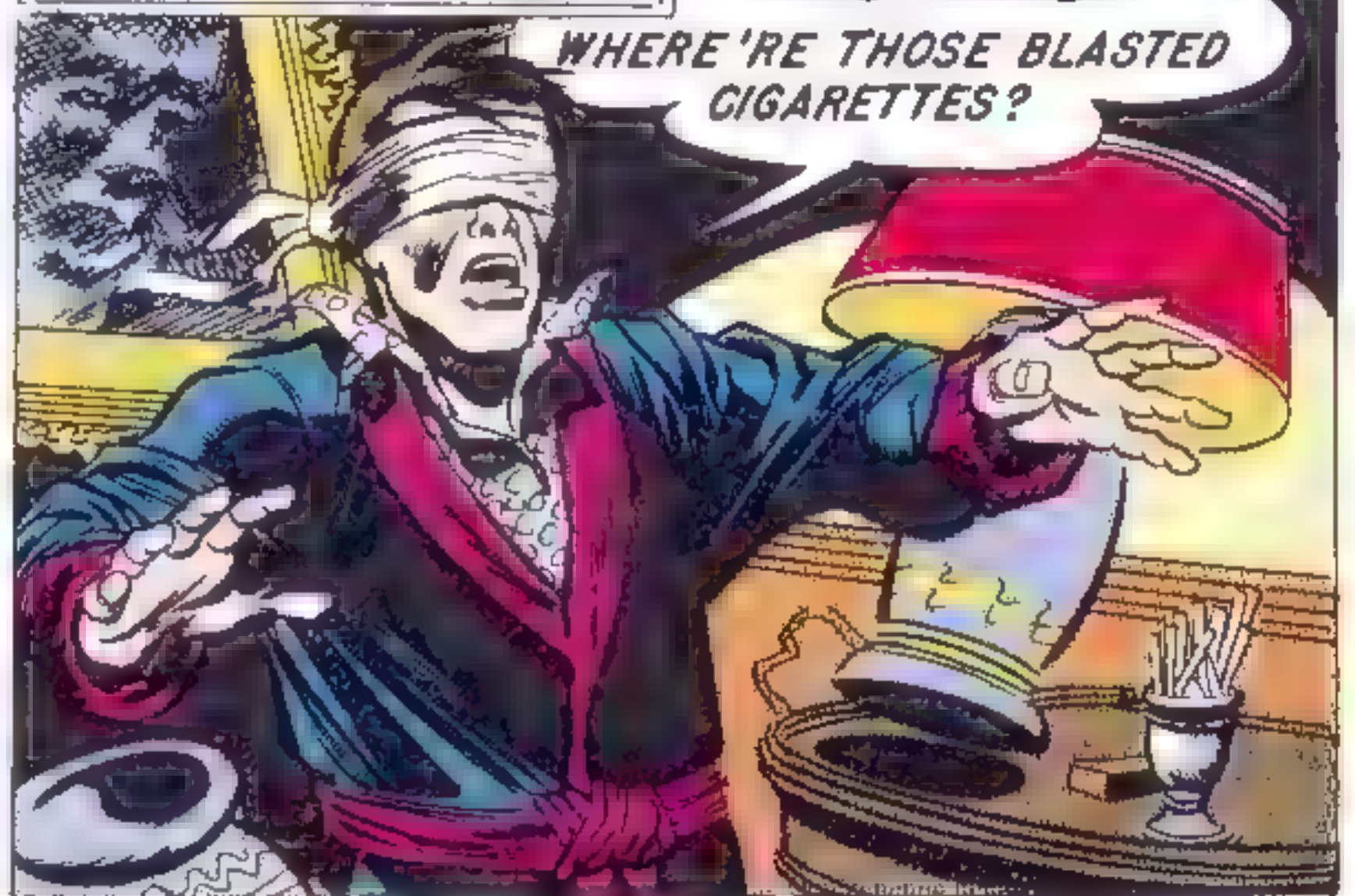
HE TURNED WITH SHUT EYES TO THE BAR... FEELING FOR A GLASS, A BOTTLE, KNOCKING THEM OVER, SPILLING, SMASHING. FINALLY, IN DESPERATION, HE OPENED HIS EYES. THE FIGURE WAS BEHIND THE BAR NOW... SMIRKING AT HIM...



IT WAS TORTURE FOR HIM, TRYING TO MOVE ABOUT WITH SHUT EYES... TRYING TO FIND HIS CIGARETTES, A MATCH... TRYING TO SATISFY HIS CRAVINGS. HE COULDN'T *HELP* OPENING HIS EYES. AND WHEN HE DID, THE FIGURE WAS ALWAYS THERE. FINALLY...



HE SAT WITH THE BLINDFOLD OVER HIS EYES... SAT ALL MORNING AND INTO THE AFTERNOON. SAMMY CAME AND WENT, ALEX REFUSING LUNCH. HE STAGGERED AROUND THE APARTMENT...



HE FELT THE CIGARETTE URN PITCH OVER, DROP TO THE FLOOR. HE WENT TO HIS HANDS AND KNEES, FEELING FOR THEM, CURSING, REACHING, NOT FINDING ONE. FINALLY HE TORE THE BLINDFOLD FROM HIS EYES...



THE FIGURE WAS THERE, LYING ON THE FLOOR, GRINNING UP AT HIM...



HE GOT TO HIS FEET, STUMBLED TOWARD THE KITCHEN. THE FIGURE STOOD BEFORE HIM, BARRING HIS WAY...



WHEREVER HE LOOKED... THE FIGURE. HE RUMMAGED THROUGH KITCHEN DRAWERS...



HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR... LIFTED IT IN A WHITE-KNUCKLED TREMBLING FIST...



THE PAIN...THE *SCREAMING UNBEARABLE PAIN* OF PLUNGING THE ICE PICK...FIRST INTO ONE EYE, THEN INTO THE OTHER...AND THE WELCOME DARKNESS THAT FOLLOWED. SAMMY'S FACE BLANCHED WHITE WHEN HE SAW ALEX KNEELING ON THE KITCHEN FLOOR...BLOOD POURING DOWN HIS CHEEKS LIKE CRIMSON TEARS...



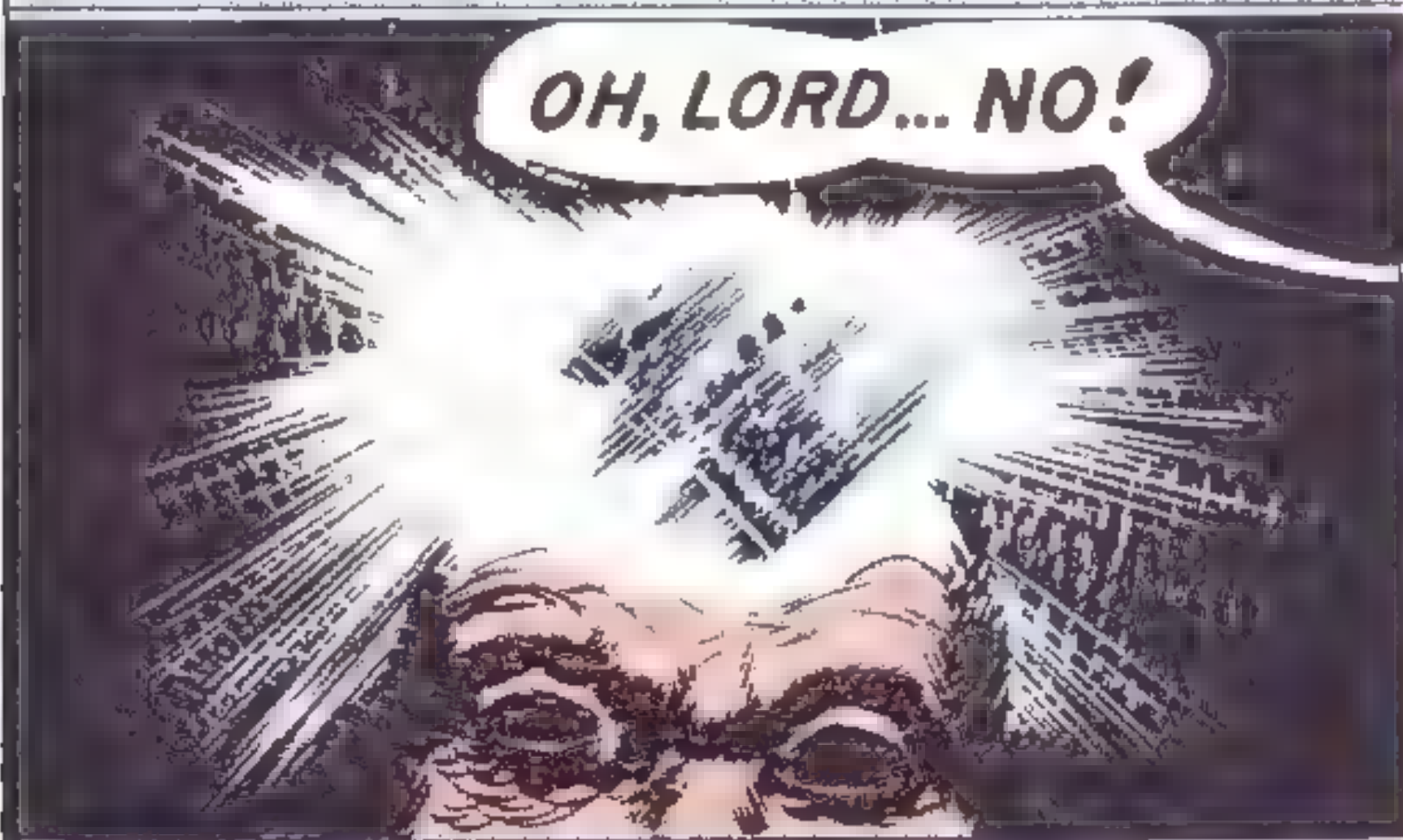
ALEX MUST HAVE FAINTED AFTER THAT...SWALLOWED UP INTO HIS SELF-IMPOSED DARKNESS. HE FLOATED IN IT...HEARING THE FAINT SCREAM OF A DISTANT SIREN...THE MUTTERING OF SUBDUE VOICES...THE SOUND OF A MOTOR...THE SWEET SMELL OF ANESTHETIC...



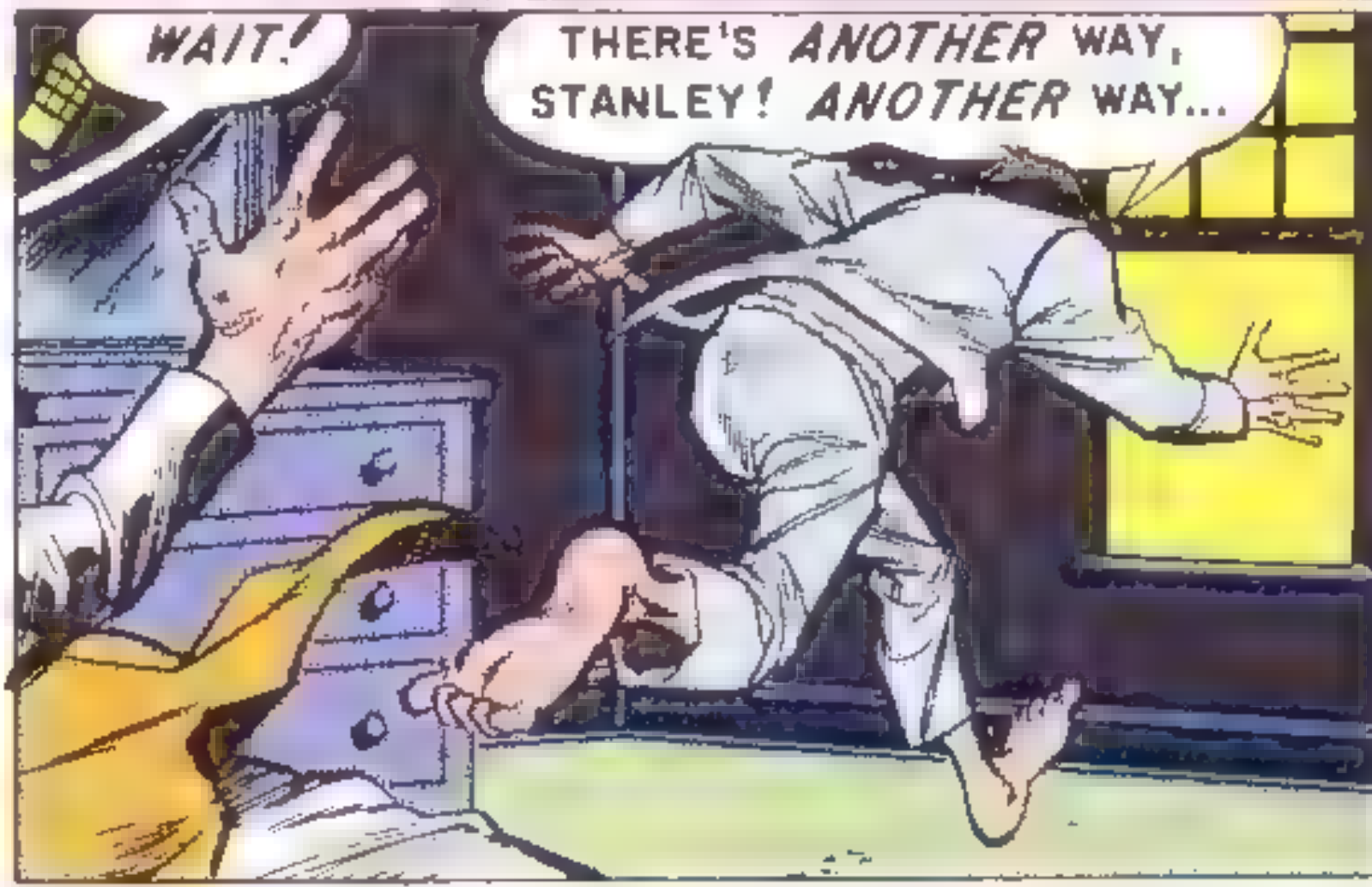
AND THEN, AN ETERNITY LATER, HE FELT HANDS TOUCHING HIM, MOVING ABOUT HIS BLIND EYES... UNWRAPPING BANDAGES...



HE COULD *SEE* AGAIN, GOD, THEY HAD MADE HIM SEE. THEY HAD REPAIRED HIS STABBED AND BLEEDING EYES AND HE COULD MAKE OUT THE FIGURE BEFORE HIM...DIM, HAZY, SWAYING...WITH A *GLEAMING OBJECT STICKING OUT OF THE CENTER OF ITS HEAD*...



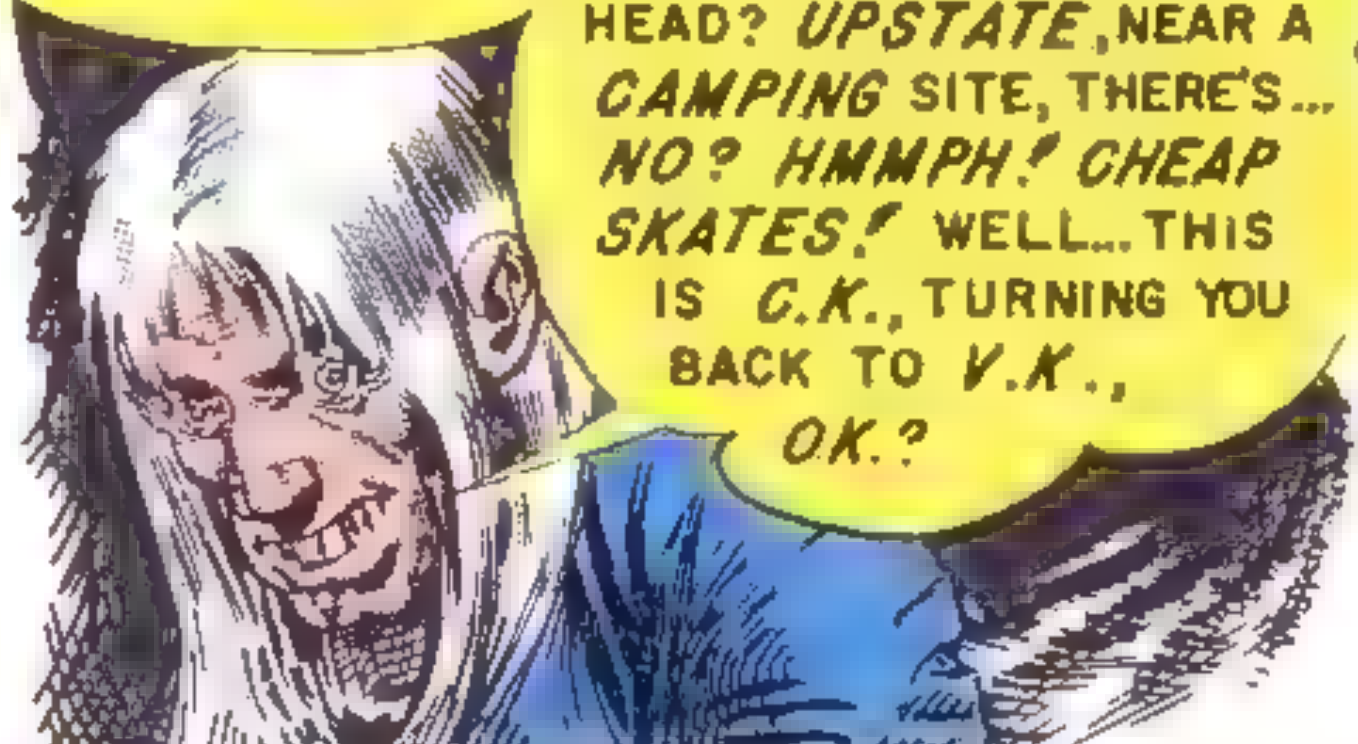
STANLEY! HE WOULD ALWAYS SEE STANLEY. THERE WOULD BE NO ESCAPE! NEVER! HERE... HERE IN THIS *HOSPITAL ROOM*, STANLEY WAS STARING AT HIM...THE *MEAT-CLEAVER SHINING IN THE RENT SKULL*. ALEX LEAPED FROM THE BED...



THE SPLINTERING OF GLASS...THE FADING SCREAM...THE THUD OF A BODY RUPTURING AND SMASHING AGAINST SOLID CONCRETE TWELVE STORIES BELOW. ALEX HAD SOLVED HIS PROBLEM. THE FIGURE WITH THE SHINING OBJECT IN THE CENTER OF ITS HEAD MOVED TO THE WINDOW AND LOOKED DOWN. THE SUNLIGHT GLINTED UPON HIS HEAD-REFLECTOR AS THE DOCTOR SHRUGGED SADLY...



SO *THAT'S MY YARN*, KIDDIES. ALEX FINALLY GOT RID OF STANLEY...FOR GOOD... BY GETTING RID OF *HIMSELF...DITTO*. ANYBODY WANT TO BUY A *SPLATTERED CORPSE*? THERE'S ONE OUTSIDE CITY HOSPITAL. NO? HOW ABOUT ONE WITH A *CLEAVER* IN ITS





THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your comics, they're Da Bomb! You see, my dad told me there was a CRYPT comic book. I got excited! Then one day I went to Atomic Comics and my brother found [some].

A few days later I found VAULT 17 and bought it. I love you and Crypt-Keeper. I hate Old Witch, she's stupid. I also got a CRYPT comic, but your's is better. Remember, you're Da Bomb!

Horror Man Mike

Phoenix, AZ

My name is Alex Gley. I am a very big fan of "Notorious 1950s EC Comics," with THE VAULT OF HORROR and TALES FROM THE CRYPT and "The Witch's Cauldron." I am making this letter because I was wondering if you (VAULT) could send me a free copy of VAULT vol. 1. Thank you.

Alex Gley, 18

Elmhurst, IL

The softcover 'annual' for \$8.95 made from these comics, or the \$20 hardback archive-like books shot directly from the original art? Either way—no freebies! A ghouls gotta eat!

—VK

Dear VK,

I'd never read VAULT 20 before. "Easel Kill Ya!" held me in a spell of morbid fascination. The demented deeds of the angry artist can hardly be condoned, yet there is something strangely compelling in the self-realization he undergoes after meeting his beautiful upstairs neighbor. His introspection has a familiar ring of truth to which we can all relate in some small way. Indeed, there is a fine line between love and hate. They aren't so much opposites as they are but two manifestations of human passion.

Far and away my favorite story in this issue is Bradbury's "The Lake". Being a hopeless romantic in a world of sad realities and senseless tragedies, I was very moved by this story (I could try to describe the degree, but I'm sure you'd think I was exaggerating). Oh, and Orlando's art is enchanting. "The Lake" instantly ranks as one of my all time favorite EC stories

Rick Olson

Minneapolis, MN

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your comics! My Mom loves them too! I think The CK sucks! His show has most of your stories on them! My favorite story is "Mask of Horror." Do you read Steven King? I do. Hey could you get Russ to give me a autograph.

Rusty Kelley

Austin, TX

Aha! First the butter, then the squeeze! Yes, I read King, and occasionally even decode his texts. But I don't have any extra King autographs lying about. Did you know King is actually MY fan? Sure, you did!

—VK

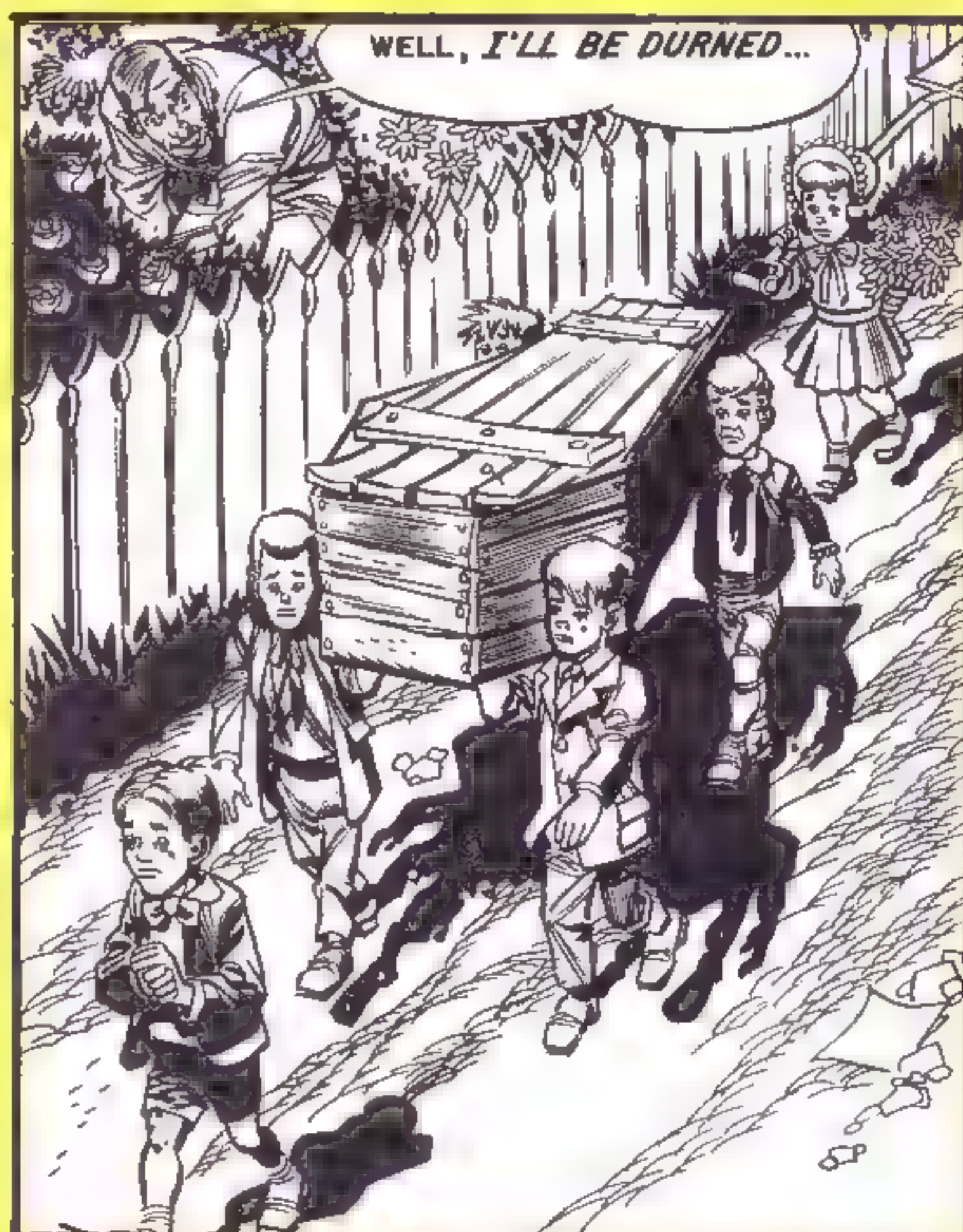
Dear Vault-Keeper,

Re: Issue 19; I nitpick below, not unmindful that (having worked under publication deadlines myself) EC churned out material of unprecedented and unsurpassed quality.

"Split Personality!" gets into astrophysics (worm-holes mentioned in your intro) and linguistics. Albeit the linguistic allusion is incorrect: telephone clicks aren't sibilant (sounds like S and Z, for which the sound stream does not completely stop); they are clicks (the articulation of which necessitates a complete stoppage of the sound stream), such are found in some African languages (e.g.: the songs of Meriam Makibo in the 1970s).

In "Who Donut?", an octopus' suckers don't ingest, they merely suck (as do the holes in this story). Nor do they scar the victim; indeed, on fellow cephalopod the squid only the suckers on the two long reaching tentacles (as opposed to the eight grasping tentacles) can inflict scars. Octopi have no reaching tentacles; hence, no way to inflict tentacle scars.

NEXT ISSUE



In "Practical Choke!", revenge is predicated on the intestinal fortitude of the unidentified victim. This tale is the disembodiment of humor (and vice versa).

"Notes to You!" featured playful language throughout, from alliteration run riot in the Old Witch's intro to the final puns. I found myself wondering who could've written the letters—perhaps... The Killionaire?

Re. Issue 20: Did the first car crash in "Easel Kill Ya!" because the suicidal, unnamed artist is kneeling in the middle of the rain-slickened road? In WEIRD SCIENCE, this story could've gotten going good if he was also the driver of the car, and fatally flattened his drenched dop-pelganger en route to his contemplated suicide, entitling the resulting painting "Don't Tread on Me".

As a side-interest, I started a list of words that have the most repetitions of each letter, with separate categories for dictionary entries and literary constructs (e.g., as found in an EC comic). As the peach-chewing wife says "Gggghhhh" when the poker clobbers her, she ties 'gig-gling' (also 4 Gs) and surpasses 'heathenish' (3 Hs). And, as The Old Witch concludes the issue with "S-S-S-S-S-S-S" (7 Ss), she surpasses 'assesses' (5 Ss). Keep up the good work!

Through No Vault of My Own (I Vault to be Alone),

Bob Gorby

Camarillo, CA

Remember, that was a mechanical rotary dial, not the toylike beep-beep button ubiquitous today!

You are obviously unfamiliar with the peculiar crossbreed octobatapus; half vampire bat, half octopus, half clotheshorse. That's three halves! He's so big, he can wear an overcoat! —VK

Hello, Again!

Time to review VAULT 19. Magnificent Johnny Craig horror cover: A+!

"Split Personality!" had excellent artwork by Craig and writing by ? tell us! Susan and Amy did kill a guilty 'honey-tongued' @*x!?m conniving con-man, but he already had a bleached spot on the back of his head (page 7—panel 1) before Susan dabbed a few drops of peroxide on Edwin's hair that night.

"Who Doughnut?": Oscar the octopus (I thought it was Calvin calamari).

You mention in your ad in 'Previews' magazine about the characters being familiar in the story "Practical Choke!", one looks like Bill Gaines. Who are the other two guys?

A EC fan's dream come true is the comic book display in Mr. Popkin's candy store in the compelling story "Notes To You!" by Ghastly.

VOH #20, "The Lake"; Tally: Rest In Peace.

David Dellario

Kensington, CT

In "Split," don't confuse the back with the top of the head! Could be embarrassing! ("Remember, friend, as you pass by...") —VK

I wrote to you previously about the "Vault of Horror" movie, prompted by a letter which appeared in your CRYPT 4, in

regards to the "Tales From The Crypt" flick. But after rereading the letter, I wanted to point out an error in your response.

It is true that the following EC comic adaptations appeared in the "Tales From The Crypt" film (1972): "Reflection Of Death," "Poetic Justice," "Wish You Were Here," and "Blind Alleys." But, the first segment was not "Collection Completed" as you suggested; it was "And All Through The House" (a grim Yuletide fable in which an escaped homicidal mental patient dons a Santa Claus costume, and stalks Joan Collins in her house, moments after she has slaughtered her hubby!). Just thought that you and your readers might want to know. In which issue does this jolly little Christmas tale appear?

Incidentally, both the "Crypt" and "Vault" movies are superior to the HBO series, in that they capture the subtle but GRUESOME flavor of the classic EC comics. If you don't believe me, just watch Peter Cushing's poignant portrayal of the garbage man in "Poetic Justice," inspired by Graham Ingels' GHASTLY masterpiece (HAUNT #12).

I just received Volume 3 (issues 11-15) of your CRYPT, VAULT, and HAUNT annuals in the mail. "Bargain In Death!" (CRYPT 12) was a truly GRRRISLY tale (featured in the "Vault Of Horror" flick). Keep up the GHOUL work, and tell The Old Witch that I want to jump her decrepit old moldering BONES! Frightfully yours,

Joe Grotenrath II

Alexandria, VA

I think I've since corrected The Crypt-Keeper's (not Russ') feeble memory and listed full, correct contents for both Amicus films. The Santa fiend will be in our VAULT 24. Are you and The Old Witch playing checkers by mail! —VK

NEXT ISSUE

AGNES TRIED TO DISCOURAGE MR. HORTON...



And now, purloined letters from the desk of The Crypt-Keeper (he was in the rumpus room watching a video of his HBO show, so I took the liberty!):

In CRYPT #18, Julia Ross exposed the fact that a few EC writers occasionally borrowed from authors, such as F. Marion Crawford. Although I cannot verify this additional info, I believe F. Marion Crawford's story, "For the Blood is Life," is also an EC tale. If memory serves me correctly the inspiration became a VAULT tale, "A Bloody Undertaking!". Both stories have suspected vampire activity as well as suspicious characters (the suspected vampires). Only at the end of each story does the reader discover the vampires' true identities, a result of the innocents' horrible fates!

Eloise Radke

Gilbert, AZ

CK has only one book on his shelf (and he hasn't finished coloring it yet), so I'll have to rely on my readers to confirm or deny. "Undertaking" appears in my VAULT 13.

-VK

Do you hate Vault-Keeper? I hate him. What issue is "The Third Little Pig" in? If you know, can you send me that

My fave stories are "Attacks of Horror", "None But the Lonely Heart" and "By the Fright of the Silvery Moon!" My favorite TV episodes are "The Third Little Pig" and the one where a [?] stays at this guy's house, the guy kills him, chops off his legs, puts him in the coffin and then at the end the guy sees him with crutches and no feet, and he hits the guy with a crow bar. What's that one called? Your friend,

Adam Rothra

Ho, ho! Now, I can but Adam on my 'needs professional help' list! According to Myron James, "The Third Pig" (correct title) was never an EC story, but an HBO original. The other episode you synopsized could be called "A Typical Day in the Crypt" The other is likely "We Ain't Got No Body!" VAULT 17.

-VK

While vacationing on a tropical beach resort in Malaysia my video camera, wallet and other valuable items were stolen. As you can tell from the police report I naturally listed among the stolen items my most prized possessions - my comic books: 1. CRYPT. 2. VAULT.

Unfortunately the thief is still on the prowl and the spoils were never recovered, but what really gets my gruesome goat is that since comics are so difficult to buy here I never had the chance to read the October issues!!

I guess I'll just have to wait until next year when I visit my brother in Nashville, to read those comics. You see, my brother also loves your horrid tales as much as me (if not more) and has turned a room in his house into a shrine to your comics. You (y'all) may remember his hauntingly, butt-ugly face - you printed his letter and photo of his very own baseball card over 2 years ago. Your friend on the other side of the world,

James P. Bowers
Q-6-D Tiara Damansara Apts.

Section 17-1 Petaling Jaya
Malaysia 46400

You know, The Old Witch vacationed in Asia last year, and came back with tanned nose and toes and sand in her sandals. Do you suppose. . .

-VK

JAMES' FLIMSY

(Police SS - Pin 263)

BALAI POLIS.

Siapa yang ambil report

Waktu dan hari bulan report 4:50 pm Sept. 28, 1996

Nama James Patrick BOWERS 023769324

Jelaki atau perempuan MALE umur 29

keturunan AMERICAN bahasa English

pekerjaan Tennis Coach tempat tinggal

Q-6-D Tiara Damansara Apt. P.5 #33 pendakwa itu.

Sect 17/1 46400 (03) 757-2797 (03) 294-4888

Aduan kula - Maxima West swimming from 12-12.45pm at The Imperial

Resort. Left my black bag, sandals - towel on the

chair and went for a walk to Club Med

After returning about an hour later I noticed

my black bag was gone, but my sandals & towel

remained. Contents of black bag:

1. Sharp video camera

A. battery charger, battery, 2 video tapes

2. wallet

A. \$1000. - 2M

B. credit cards (2 visas)

C. maybank ATM card

D. Driver's license (Illinois issued)

3. Hotel key # 218

4. 2 comic books

A. TALES FROM THE CRYPT

B. VAULT of HORROR

Also available this month are WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED TALES. Watch for HAUNT, CRIME and FRONTLINE COMBAT next month. Don't forget HAUNT, FRONTLINE COMBAT and CRIME! Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic)!

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, SOLD OUT; FRONT #1-4, \$2 each; all others up thru issue #3, \$1.50 each; CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-16, and VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, \$2 each. All others, \$2.50 each.

Don't forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-11, \$2 each) and the 18 issues of SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES (#1-3, \$1.50 each; #4-15, \$2.00 each; #16-18, \$2.50 each)!

Add \$5 per order (\$10 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to.

VAULT

GEMSTONE

POB 469

WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS

VAULT OF HORROR "#32" (#21, AUG/SEP 53)

COVER by Johnny Craig

"Whirlpool"

"Out of His Head!"

"An Ample Sample"

"Funereal Disease"

Johnny Craig

Jack Davis

George Evans

Graham Ingels

We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We edit for clarity, accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters, to do so we need your address on the individual letter.

**HERE'S A SWEET TERROR-TALE
WITH AN APPETIZING WIND-UP!**

An AMPLE SAMPLE



IRWIN SLAMMED THE FRONT DOOR OF HIS HOUSE WITH A GRUNT OF SATISFACTION AND STEPPED OUT INTO THE TEAMING DOWNPOUR THAT PLUMMETED EARTHWARD FROM THE BLACK HEAVENS OVERHEAD. THE RAINDROPS SPLASHED CONCENTRIC RINGS IN THE RAPIDLY FORMING PUDDLES, WATERFALLED OFF THE BOWED-LEAVED SHRUBBERY, AND STREAMED DOWN IRWIN'S FACE, CREATING THE ILLUSION THAT HE WAS CRYING...AS IF TEARS WERE OVERFLOWING FROM HIS EYES. ACTUALLY, IF YOU LOOKED CLOSELY AT IRWIN, YOU COULDN'T REALLY TELL. HE CARRIED A SAW AND HAMMER IN HIS HANDS.



IRWIN CROSSED THE FRONT LAWN AND SLOSHED UP THE STEPS TO THE PROTECTION OF THE PORCH OF THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR. HE RANG THE BELL...

WHY, IRWIN! YOU'RE SOAK-
ING WET! YOU DIDN'T
HAVE TO RETURN THOSE
THINGS TONIGHT.

I...I WANTED TO,
BERT! I'VE FINISHED!
CARE TO SEE WHAT
I MADE...?



IRWIN'S NEIGHBOR HESITATED...

WELL, IRWIN. I'D I'D
LIKE TO. BUT...THE
RAIN... I. COULDN'T
IT WAIT UNTIL
TOMORROW?

ALL
RIGHT,
BERT.
TOMORROW.



IRWIN TURNED TO GO. BERT PUT
OUT HIS HAND, TOUCHING IRWIN'S
ARM.

HOLD ON, IRWIN!
DON'T FEEL BAD.
I'LL COME OVER
SOON AS THE
RAIN LETS UP.

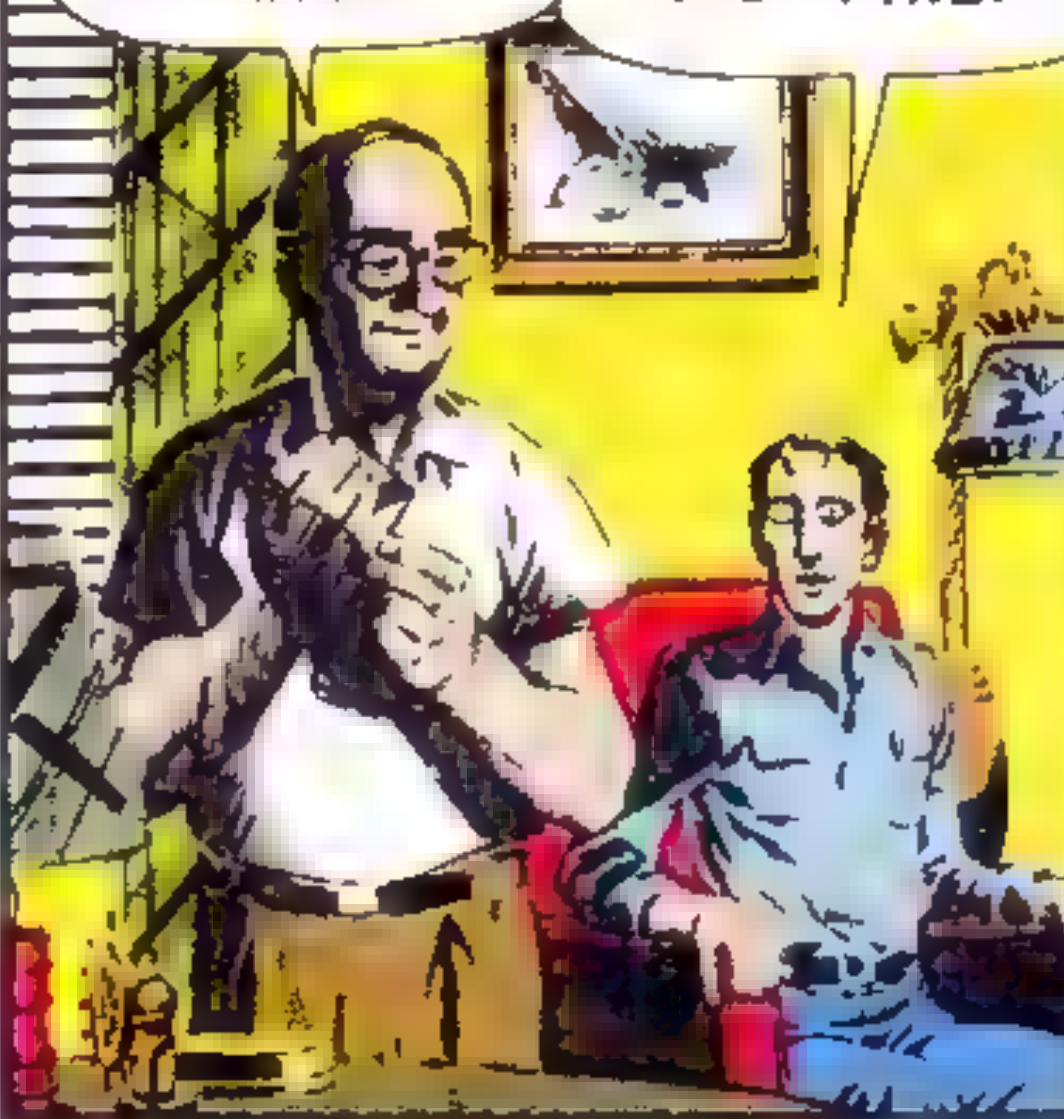
WILL YOU,
BERT? *SWELL!*
I'LL WAIT
HERE *WITH*
YOU.



IRWIN PUSHED PAST BERT... ON INTO
THE LIVING ROOM... AND SAT DOWN.
BERT LOOKED AT HIM. THERE WAS
SOMETHING *STRANGE* ABOUT IRWIN
TONIGHT, SOMETHING *DIFFERENT*...

HOW'S *HANNAH*,
IRWIN?

HANNAH? WHY.
SHE'S *FINE!*



IRWIN TURNED AWAY SO THAT BERT WOULDN'T SEE
THAT THE DROPLETS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHEEKS
WERE *REAL TEARS, THIS TIME*...

WHAT'S *WRONG*, IRWIN?
YOU'RE NOT *YOURSELF*
TONIGHT! WHAT'S
BOTHERING YOU?

BERT, I... I...



IRWIN SIGHED AND SAT BACK IN HIS CHAIR. HIS FACE
SEEMED TO CLOUD UP DARK, AND HIS EYES HAD A FAR-
AWAY LOOK ABOUT THEM...

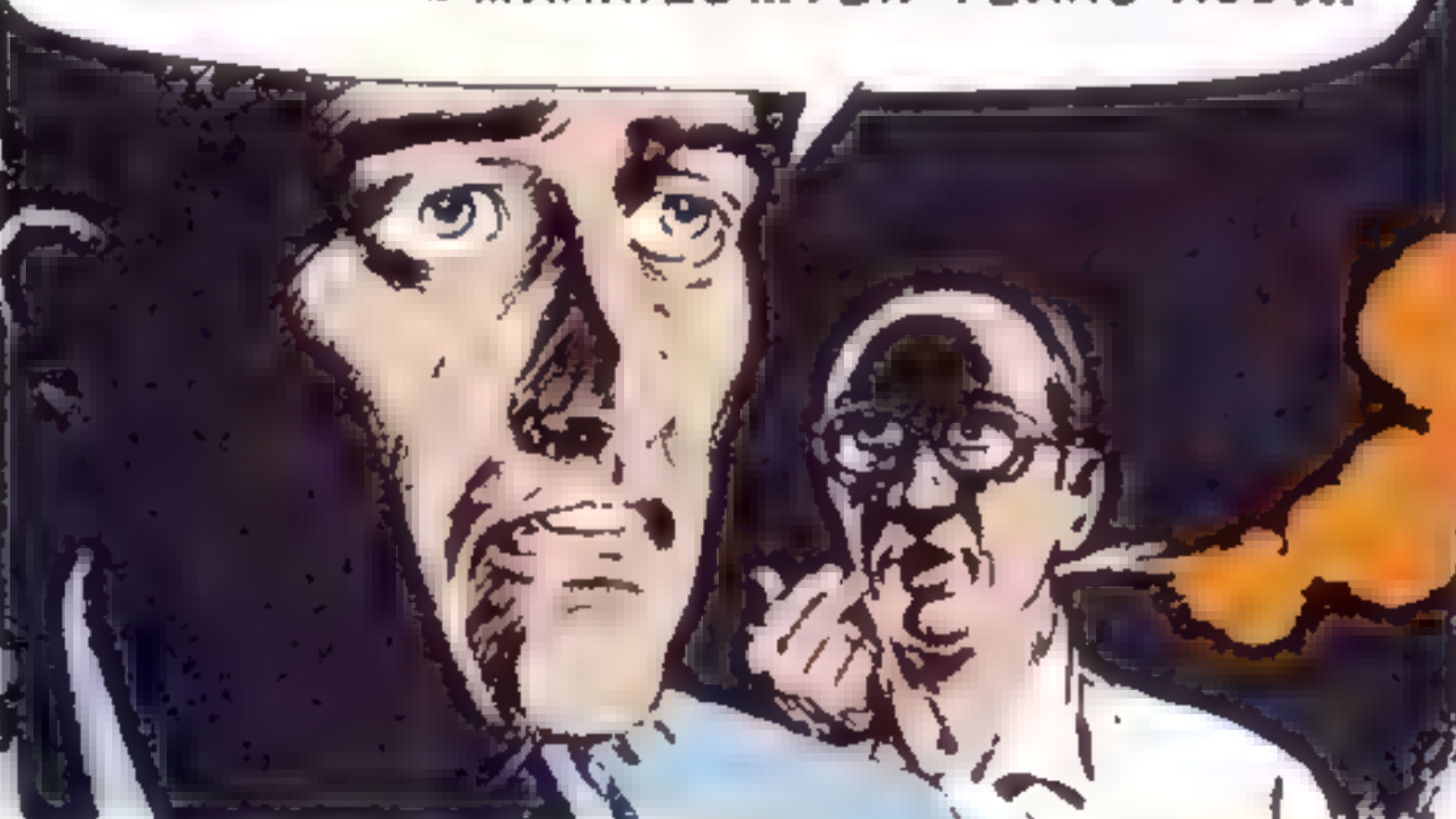
WILL YOU *LISTEN*, BERT?
WILL YOU LISTEN TO THE
WHOLE STORY?

GO AHEAD, OLD MAN.
GET IT OFF YOUR CHEST!
YOU'LL *FEEL BETTER!*

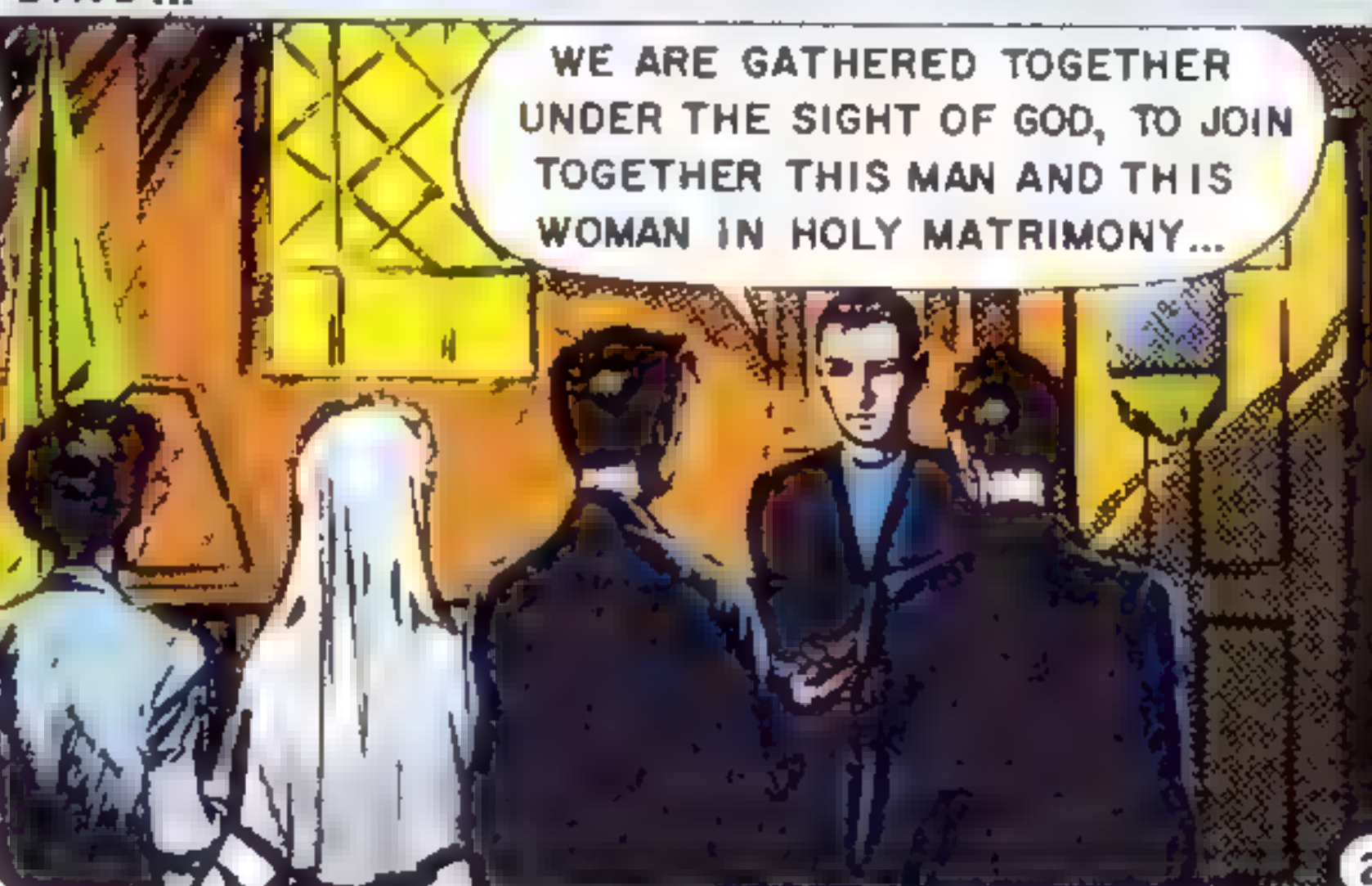


IRWIN'S VOICE WAS FULL OF THE SADNESS OF LONG-
AGO MEMORIES AND OLD SOUVENIRS PACKED AWAY IN
DUSTY BOXES IN DARK ATTICS. IT WAS TOUCHED WITH
THE SADNESS OF LOST YOUTH AND A FADING SUMMER,
WHEN LEAVES DRY AND FALL FROM GREYING TREES...

LET ME *TELL* YOU ABOUT *HANNAH*, BERT. LET ME
TELL YOU ABOUT A *HANNAH* YOU *NEVER KNEW*.
THE *HANNAH* I *MARRIED*... *TEN YEARS AGO*...



'SHE WAS *THIN* THEN, BERT, YES, IT'S HARD TO *BELIEVE*,
BUT SHE *WAS!* SHE *WASN'T* THE MOST *BEAUTIFUL*
CREATURE ON EARTH, BUT NEITHER WAS I THE MOST
HANDSOME. AND I LOVED HER. I REMEMBER OUR *WED-*
DING...

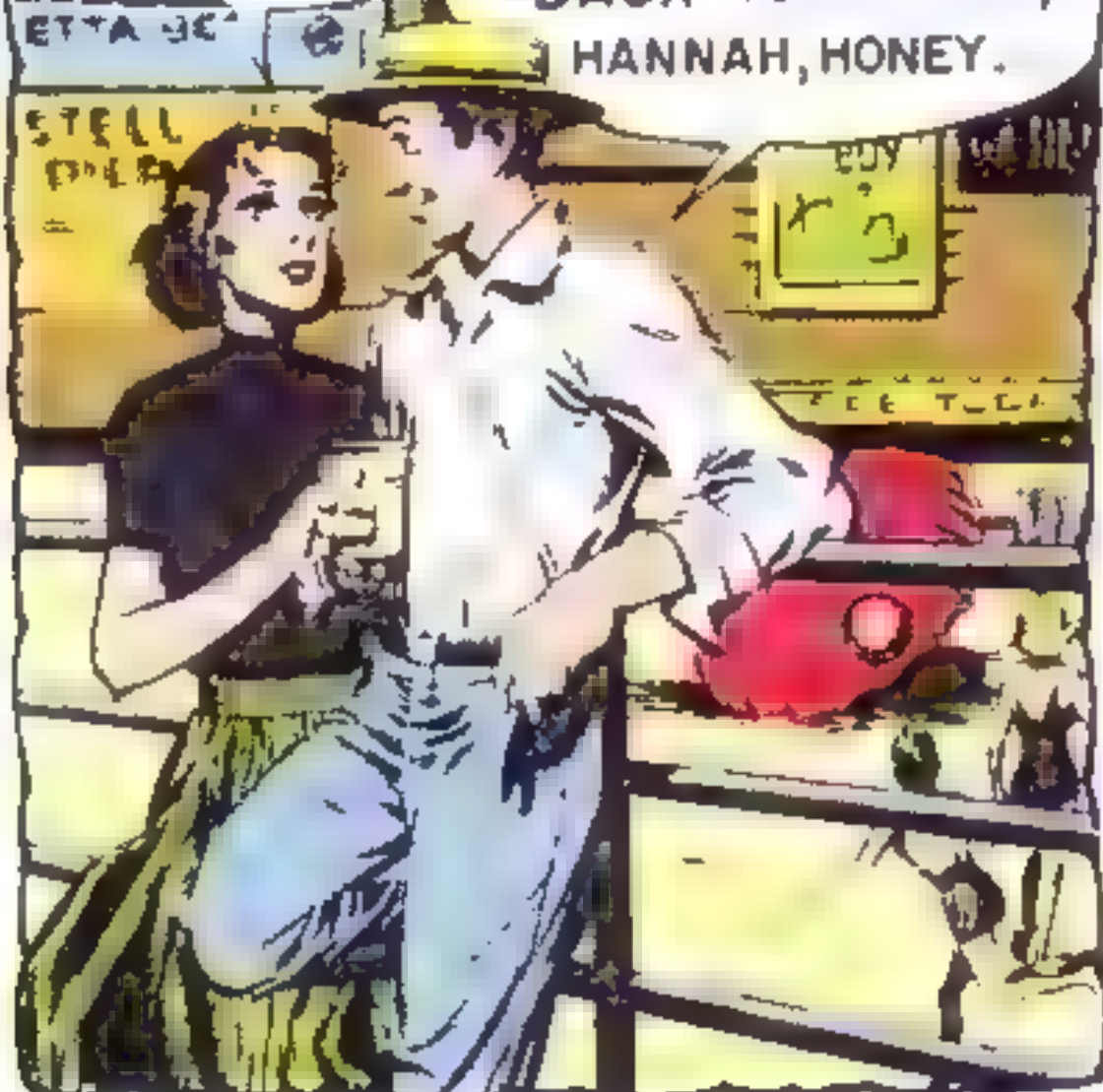


WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER
UNDER THE SIGHT OF GOD, TO JOIN
TOGETHER THIS MAN AND THIS
WOMAN IN HOLY MATRIMONY...

'AND I REMEMBER THE DELIGHTFUL THREE-DAY HONEYMOON WE SPENT AT ATLANTIC CITY. IT TOOK ALMOST ALL OF MY SAVINGS...'

I LOVE IT HERE, IRWIN.

TOO BAD WE HAVE TO GO BACK TOMORROW, HANNAH, HONEY.



'MAYBE I NEVER SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN MARRIED ON SO LITTLE MONEY, BERT. MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE WAITED. THE LITTLE I HAD LEFT WENT FOR THE FIRST MONTH'S RENT FOR THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR...'

LIKE IT, HANNAH?

IT'S VERY NICE, IRWIN.



'I WAS MAKING THIRTY A WEEK BACK THEN, BERT. OF COURSE, IN THOSE DAYS, A COUPLE COULD GET ALONG ON THAT... IF THEY SPENT IT WISELY. BUT HANNAH DEVELOPED A VICE A SHORT TIME AFTER WE WERE MARRIED. CANDY!...'

HAVE SOME, IRWIN. TRY THESE! THEY'RE DELICIOUS!

HANNAH! THIS BOX OF CANDY MUST HAVE COST TWO DOLLARS. YOU KNOW WE CAN'T AFFORD IT!



'MAYBE IT WAS ALL MY FAULT, BERT. MAYBE THE CANDY HANNAH CRAVED WAS A SUBSTITUTE FOR A CRAVING OF HERS THAT I, AS HER HUSBAND, COULDN'T SATISFY. ANYWAY, SHE KEPT BUYING IT... BOX AFTER BOX...'

HANNAH! ANOTHER BOX OF CANDY?! BUT YOU JUST BOUGHT ONE THREE DAYS AGO.

LOOK, IRWIN. ISN'T THIS A WONDERFUL IDEA? IT'S A WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX!



SEE! THERE'S A DIAGRAM ON THE BOX-COVER. IT TELLS YOU WHAT KIND OF CANDY EACH ONE IS...

BUT HANNAH! IT'S SO EXPENSIVE!



WATCH, IRWIN! THE DIAGRAM SAYS THIS ONE IS A CARAMEL. SO, I BITE INTO IT AND...SEE...CARAMEL! YOU DON'T HAVE TO GUESS!

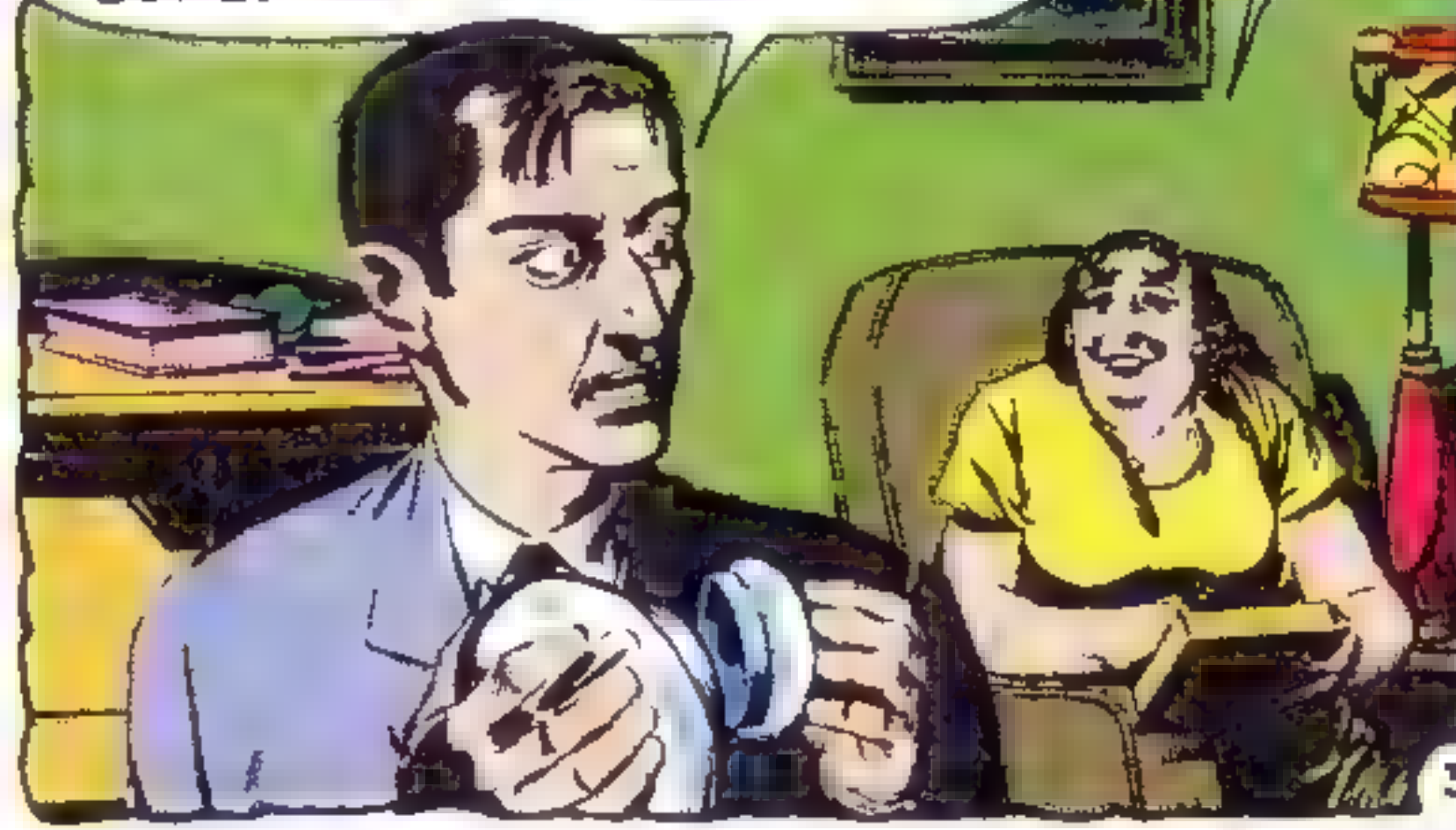
OH...HANNAH...



'THE MORE I OBJECTED, THE MORE CANDY HANNAH DEVOURED. THAT'S HOW SHE GOT SO FAT, BERT. EATING CANDY...'

HANNAH, I...I NEED SOME SOCKS. MY OLD ONES ARE FALLING APART. I PUT SOME MONEY IN THIS SUGAR BOWL. WHAT HAPPENED TO IT?

I SPENT IT, IRWIN!



'IT GOT SO BAD, HANNAH BEGAN TAKING MONEY THAT WE NEEDED FOR *NECESSITIES*, AND SPENT IT ON HER BLASTED CANDY...'

ANOTHER WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX, THAT'S THE THIRD THIS WEEK!

THEY'RE MY FAVORITE!

'YOU DON'T KNOW THE *ANGUISH* I WENT THROUGH, BERT. HANNAH GAINED MORE AND MORE *WEIGHT*. REMEMBER WHEN *YOU* MOVED IN?..'

THE NAME'S BERT...

IRWIN'S MY NAME. AND THAT'S MY WIFE, HANNAH

'YOU NEVER KNEW THAT HANNAH HAD ONCE BEEN THIN AND ATTRACTIVE, DID YOU BERT? I NEVER TOLD YOU. I WAS TOO ASHAMED...'

HAVE ONE, BERT. JUST PICK OUT WHAT YOU LIKE FROM THE DIAGRAM

NO THANKS, HANNAH. I'M ON A DIET.

NICE HAVING YOU AS OUR NEW NEIGHBOR, BERT.

'DID YOU KNOW I WORE THE SAME *SHABBY OVERCOAT* FOR *SEVEN YEARS*, BERT, BECAUSE I *COULDN'T AFFORD* TO BUY A NEW ONE?'

HANNAH! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS. YOU'RE SPENDING ALMOST *TEN DOLLARS A WEEK* ON CANDY!

I LIKE IT! WHAT ELSE HAVE I GOT IN LIFE?

I NEED A NEW *OVERCOAT*, HANNAH. *WINTER'S* COMING ON, AND THERE'S NO *WARMTH* LEFT IN MINE!

SAVE UP OUT OF YOUR *LUNCH MONEY*, BUSTER. I TAKE CARE OF *MY* NEEDS OUT OF *MY ALLOWANCE*. YOU TAKE CARE OF *YOUR* NEEDS OUT OF *YOURS*!

BUT I GIVE YOU MY *WHOLE SALARY*, HANNAH. I ONLY GET *THREE DOLLARS A WEEK* FOR *CARFARE* AND *LUNCH MONEY*.

EAT *SMALLER LUNCHES*...

'SHE WAS UNREASONABLE, BERT. WHEN I GOT MY *RAISE*, I DIDN'T TELL HER. I *COULDN'T*! I WAS WEARING SHIRTS WITH *FRAYED COLLARS*... *TIES* THAT WOULDN'T DRY-CLEAN... *WORN-OUT SHOES*. I SAVED THE EXTRA *FIVE DOLLARS* I GOT EACH WEEK AND HIDDEN IT FROM HER...'

HANNAH!

'SHE FOUND THE *MONEY*, BERT. TODAY, WHILE I WAS AT WORK, SHE *FOUND IT*...'



'*TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS*. TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS THAT I WAS *SAVING* FOR *CLOTHES*...CLOTHES I *NEED BADLY*. AND SHE *SPENT IT*! ALL OF IT!'



'SHE BOUGHT FOUR FIVE-POUND WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOXES, BERT. *FOUR OF THEM*...'

HANNAH!
HOW *COULD* YOU?

I'M SET FOR *TWO WEEKS*, IRWIN!



'I SAW RED, BERT! SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME. I FELT FUNNY AND MY HEART STARTED RACING WILDLY AND THERE WAS A HEAT IN MY BODY THAT RUSHED MADLY AROUND, BURNING OUTWARD IN MY HANDS... MY FACE. I LOOKED AT THE HALF-FINISHED WHITEMAN SAMPLE-BOX WITH ITS DIAGRAM, AND THE OTHER BOXES AND...

IRWIN! DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!

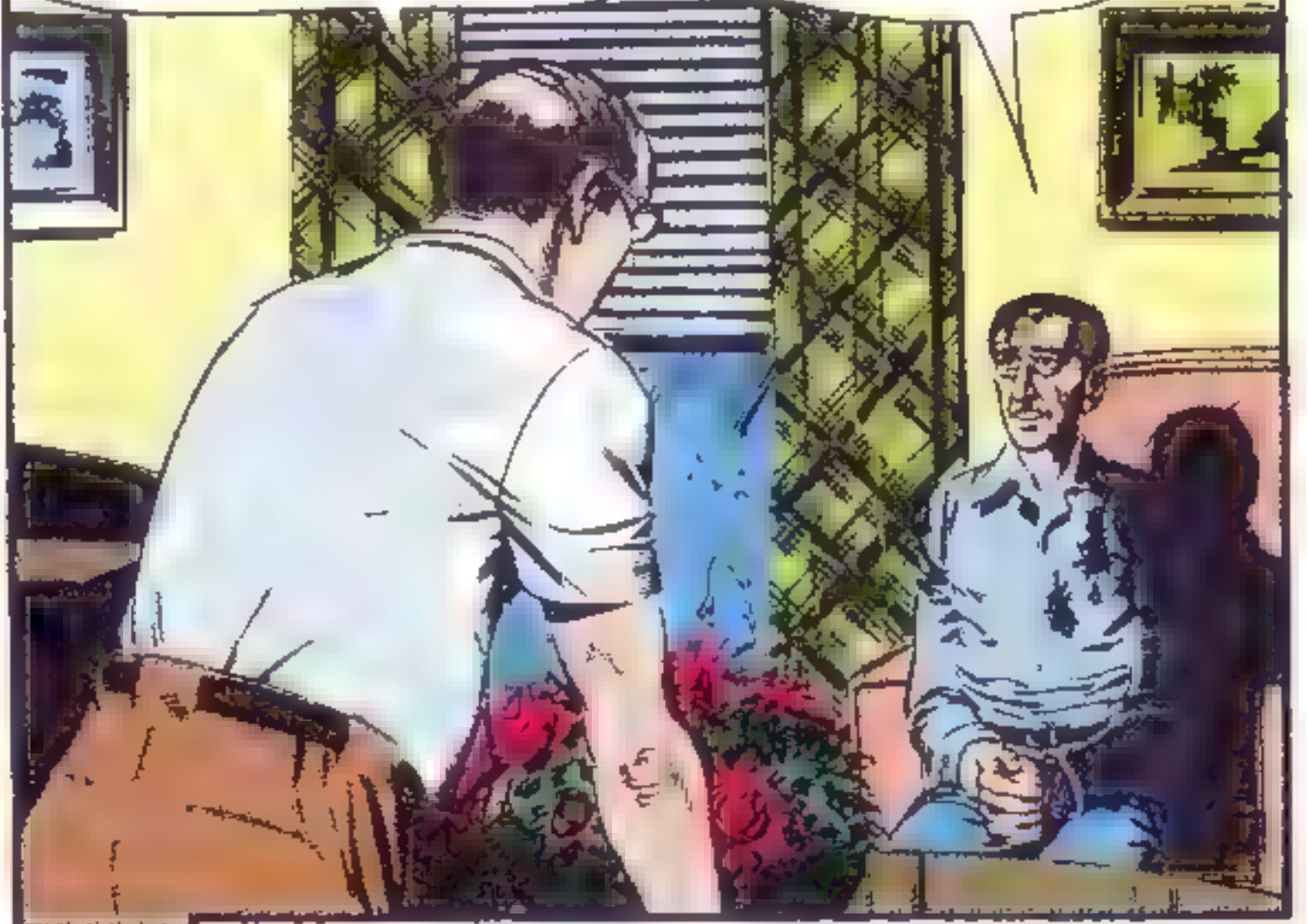
*HANNAH...
HANNAH...*



IRWIN'S VOICE TRAILED OFF INTO A CHOKING SOB. BERT SHIFTED UNCOMFORTABLY...WAITING...THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE...

IRWIN. IRWIN...WHAT DID YOU NEED THE *HAMMER* FOR...THE *SAW*?

I *MADE* SOMETHING, BERT. SOMETHING FOR *HANNAH!*



BERT SHIVERED. HE FELT SUDDENLY FRIGHTENED. THE FEAR SWEEPED OVER HIM, TURNING HIS STOMACH INTO A TIGHT KNOT OF APPREHENSION...

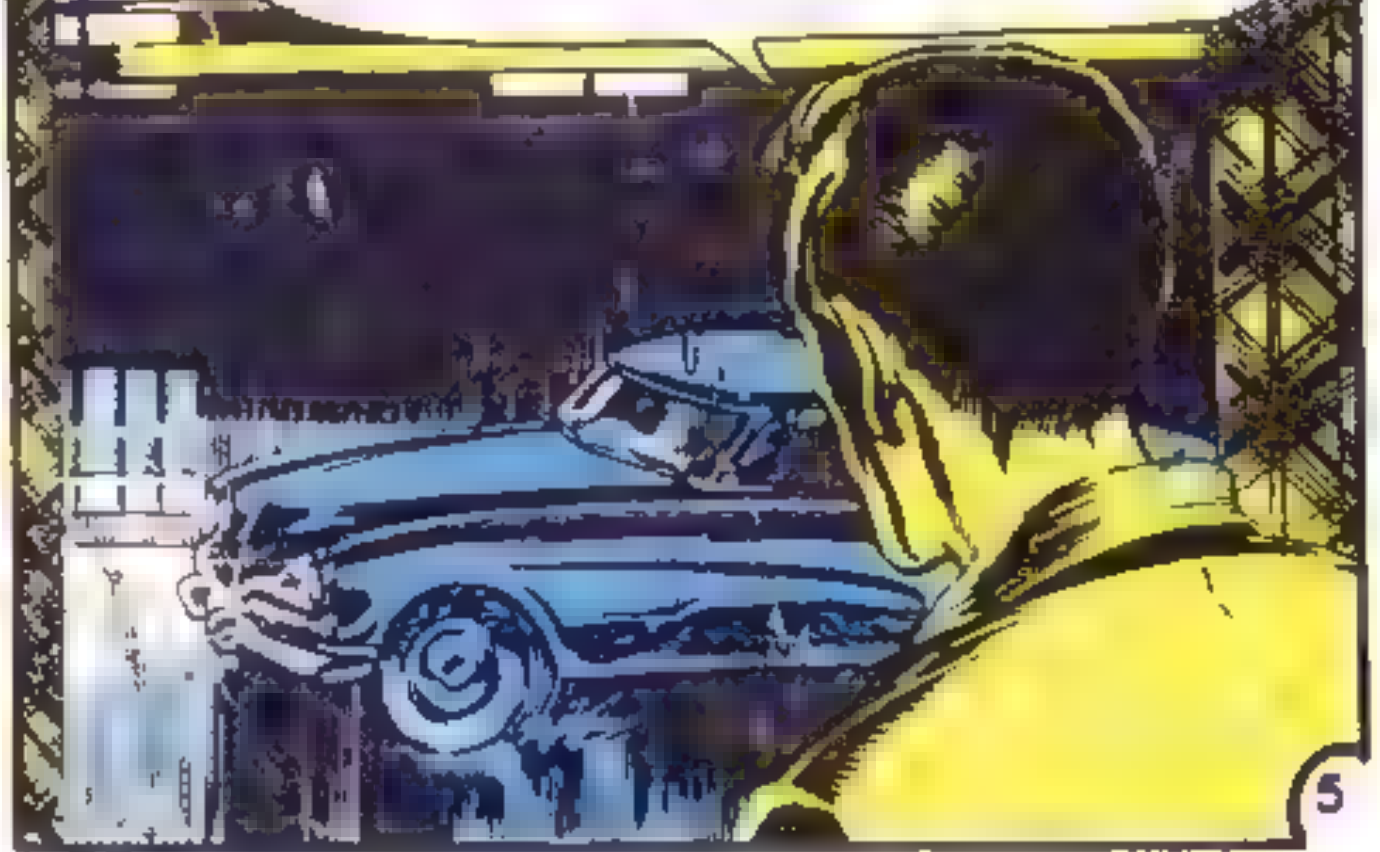
THAT'S...THAT'S *BLOOD* ON YOUR SHIRT, IRWIN.

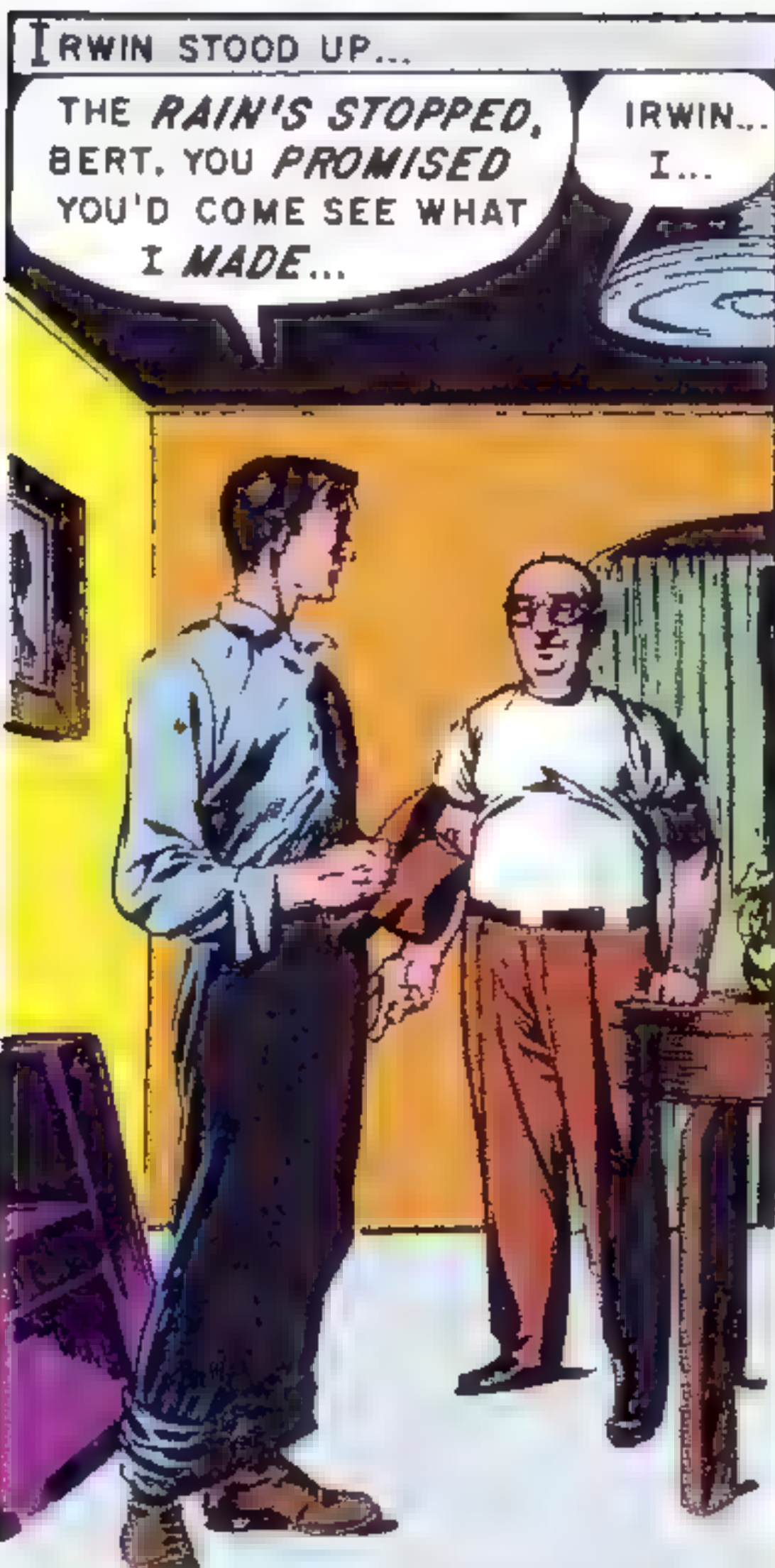
UH-HUH.



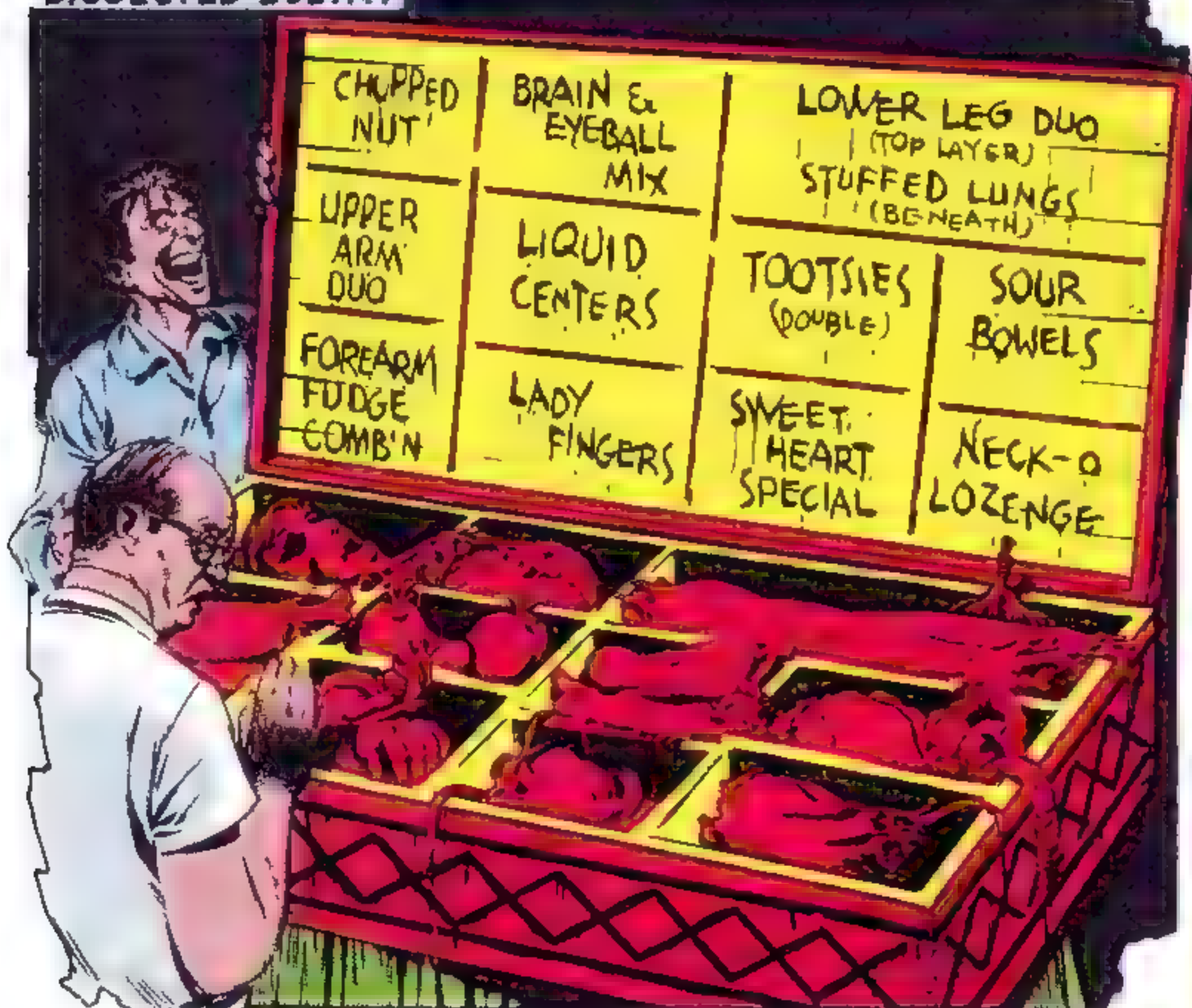
IRWIN STARED OUT AT THE WET STREETS. THE RAIN HAD STOPPED...

I *MURDERED* HER, BERT! *HANNAH!* I *MURDERED* HER!





IT WAS A *SAMPLE-BOX*, ALL RIGHT. JUST LIKE THE *WHITEMAN* *SAMPLE-BOXES* HANNAH HAD LOVED SO DEARLY. ONLY *THIS* BOX WAS TOO *HUGE* TO HOLD *CANDY*. THIS BOX WAS *JUST RIGHT* FOR THE GORY SAMPLES IT DID HOLD. AND THE DIAGRAM CRUDELY SCRAWLED ON THE INSIDE OF ITS OPEN COVER IDENTIFIED AND DENOTED THE EXACT LOCATION OF *EACH SEGMENT* OF HANNAH'S *DISMEMBERED* AND *DISSECTED BODY*...



HEH, HEH. AND THAT'S MY *SWEET-STORY* FOR *THIS* ISSUE, KIDDIES. IRWIN'S IN A *PADDLED CELL* NOW, PICKING THE *BUTTONS* OFF THE PADDING AND POPPING THEM INTO HIS *MOUTH*, AND WITH *EACH ONE*, HE SCREAMS '*CARAMEL!*' BUT THE *GUARDS* JUST PEER IN THROUGH THE LITTLE GLASS WINDOW IN THE DOOR, MAKE SURE HE'S NOT *CHOKING* TO DEATH, AND SHAKE THEIR HEADS. THEY NEVER *SAW* A GUY SO *CRAZY* OVER *CANDY!* NOW THE *OLD WITCH* AWAITS WITH HER *GRUESOME GRUEL*. I CAN *SMELL* IT FROM *HERE*, SO... *DROOPS*, HA-TEN-SHUN! *HOLD... NOSE! EYES... RIGHT!*

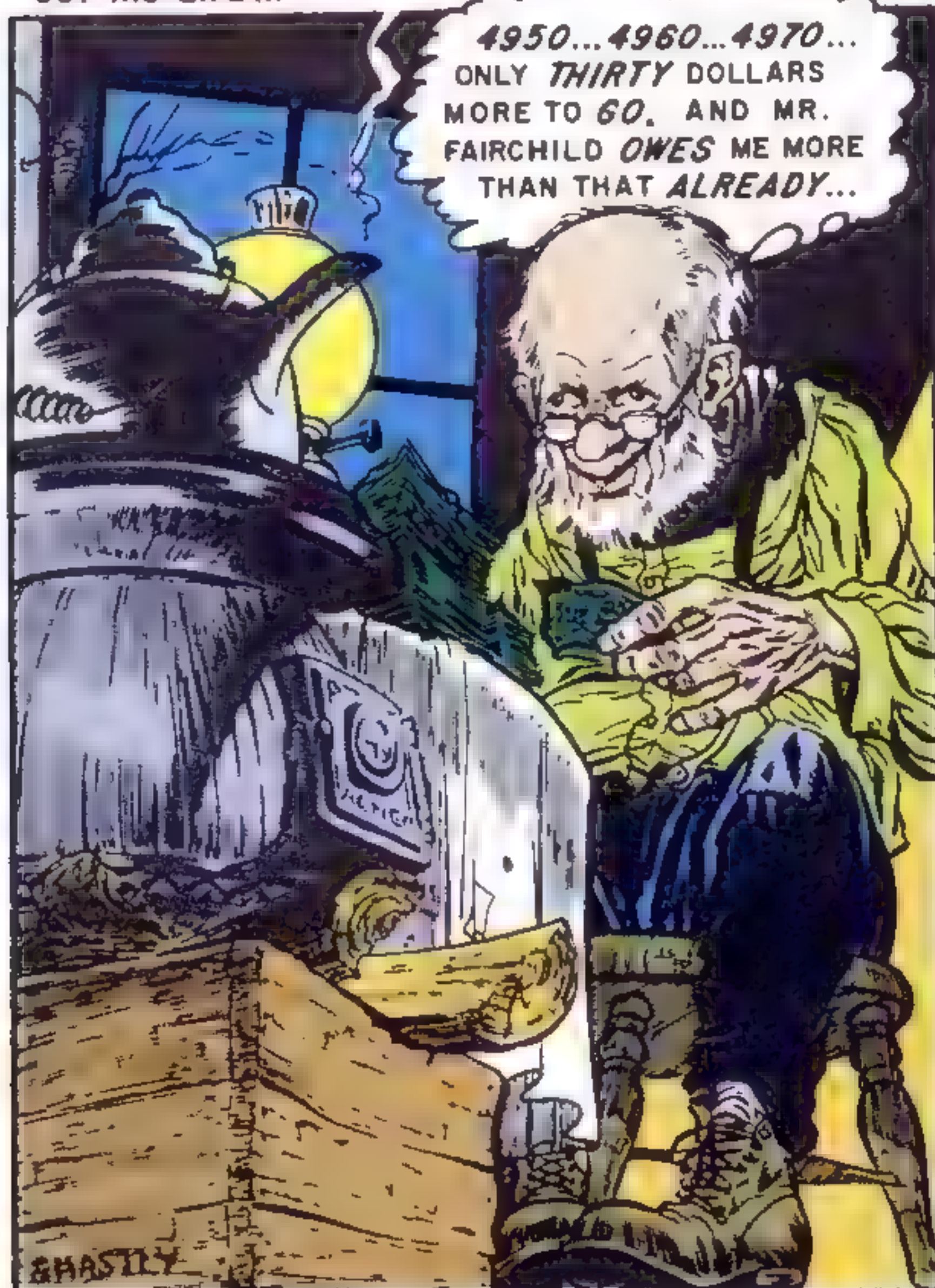


THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE. SO IT'S WIND-UP TIME IN V.K.'S MAG AGAIN, AND I'M THE GAL WHAT CAN DO IT UP BROWN. SO, WELCOME TO THE HAUNT OF FEAR, FIENDS. THIS IS YOUR GREEPS-COOK, THE OLD WITCH, READY WITH ANOTHER REEKING RECIPE. HUNGRY FOR HORROR? GOOD! THEN FEAST ON THE YOWL-YARN I CALL ...

FUNEREAAL DISEASE!

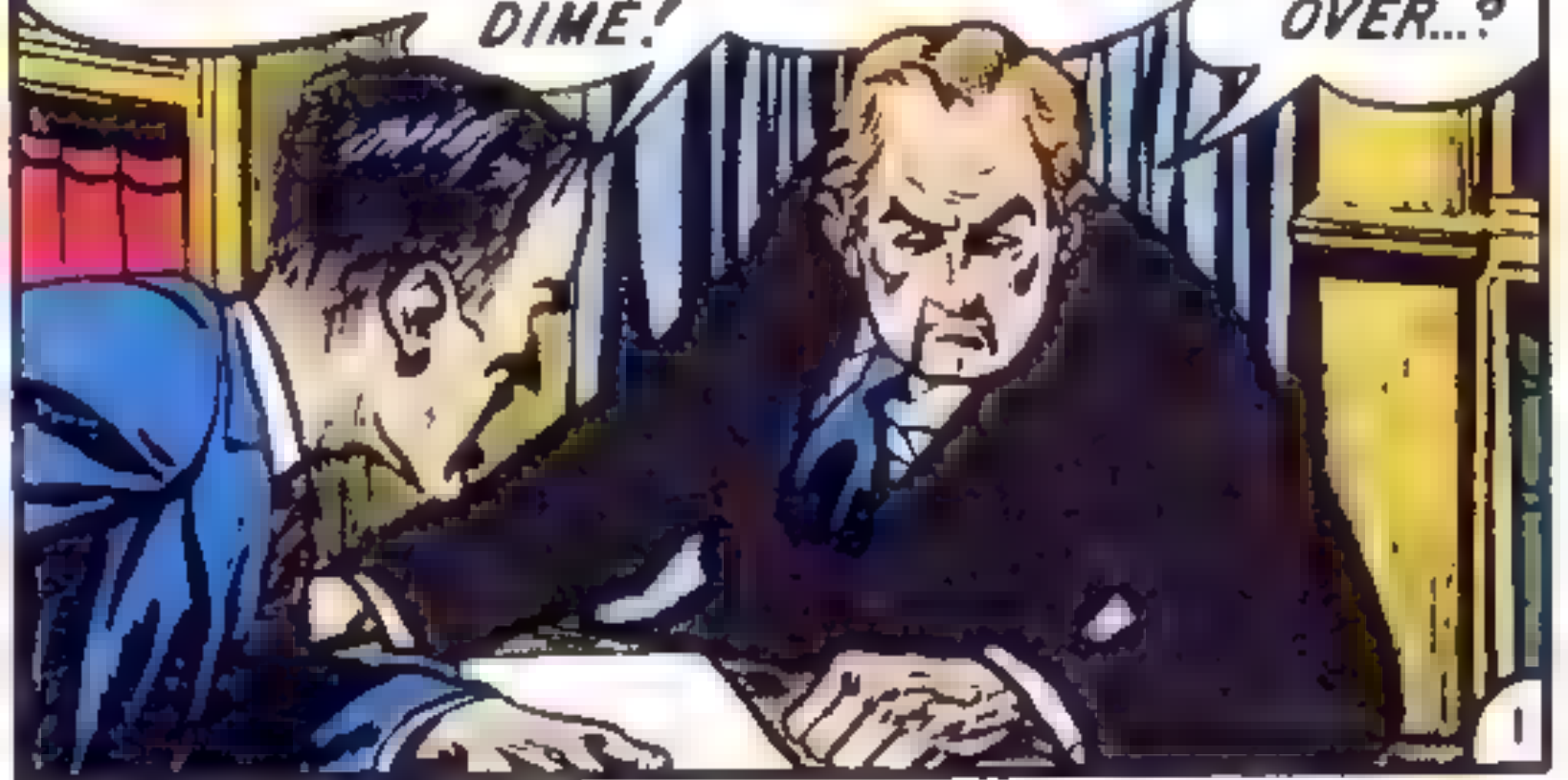
ON NIGHTS WHEN THE WIND SWEEPED OVER THE FAIRCHILD ESTATE AND SCREAMED THROUGH THE TREES AND WHISTLED AROUND THE LUXURIOUS MAIN-HOUSE... WHEN ITS CHILL CREPT INTO HIS AGED BRITTLE BONES, WARNING HIM OF HIS APPROACHING INEVITABLE DEATH... OLD JASPER MILLIKEN WOULD SIT IN HIS SPARSELY FURNISHED GARDENER'S COTTAGE AND COUNT THE NEAT STACK OF WRINKLED BILLS THAT HE'D SAVED THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE ...

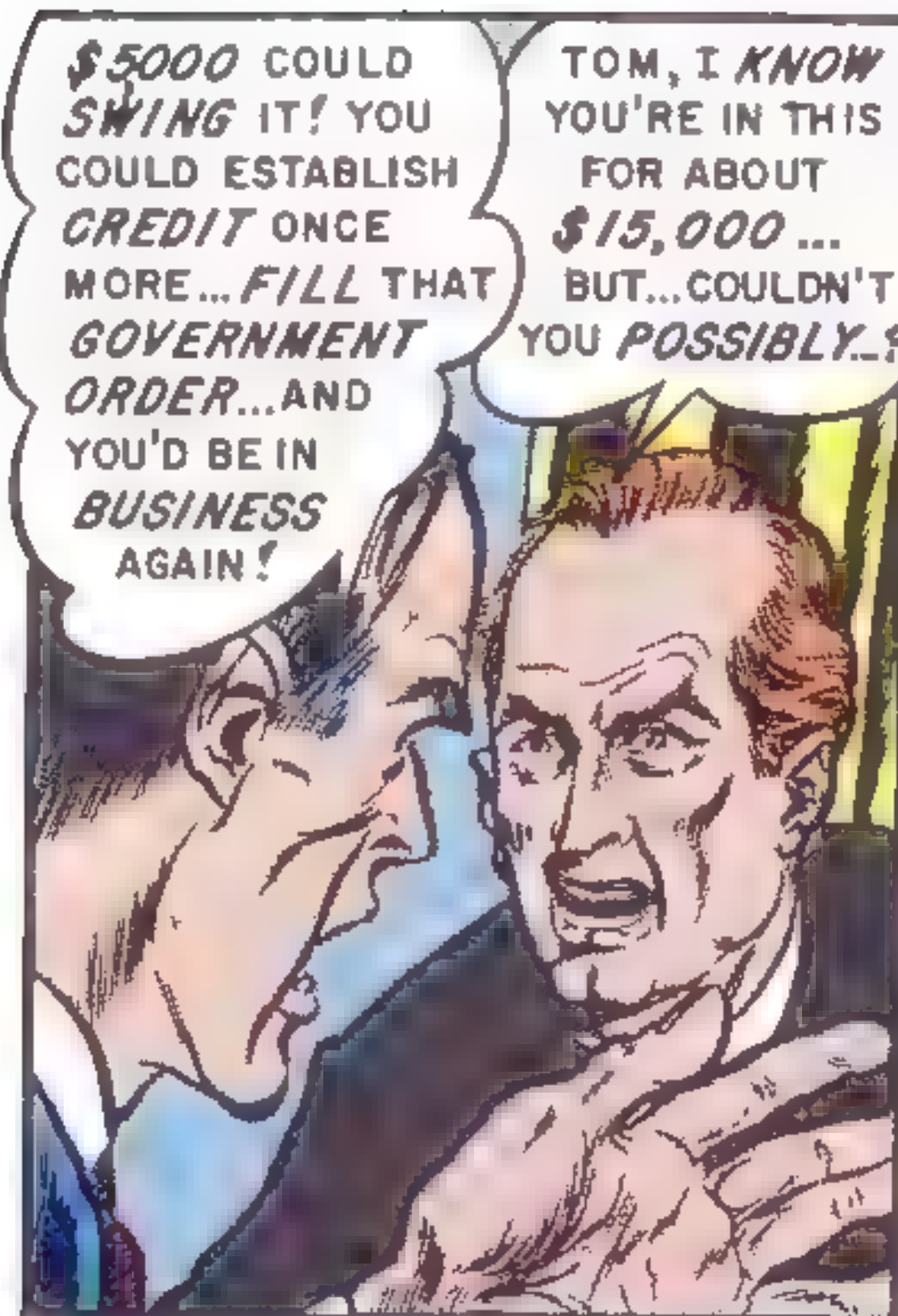


BUT ON ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT, WHILE OLD JASPER, THE GARDENER, SMILED AND SIGHED AND FONDLED AND ADMIRERD HIS SAVINGS, AND THOUGHT ABOUT THE LIFE-LONG DREAM HIS MONEY WOULD FINALLY FULFILL, HIS EMPLOYER, NILES FAIRCHILD, SAT AT HIS DESK IN THE HUGE BOOK-LINED LIBRARY IN THE MAIN HOUSE AND LISTENED TO THE SAD VOICE OF HIS PERSONAL ACCOUNTANT, TOM KELTON...

THAT'S THE *STORY*, NILES. YOU'RE MORTGAGED TO THE HILT! THEY'VE ALL REFUSED YOU MORE CREDIT UNTIL YOU PAY WHAT YOU OWE! YOU'RE FACING BANKRUPTCY... A JAIL SENTENCE! AND I CAN'T HELP YOU WITH ANOTHER DIME!

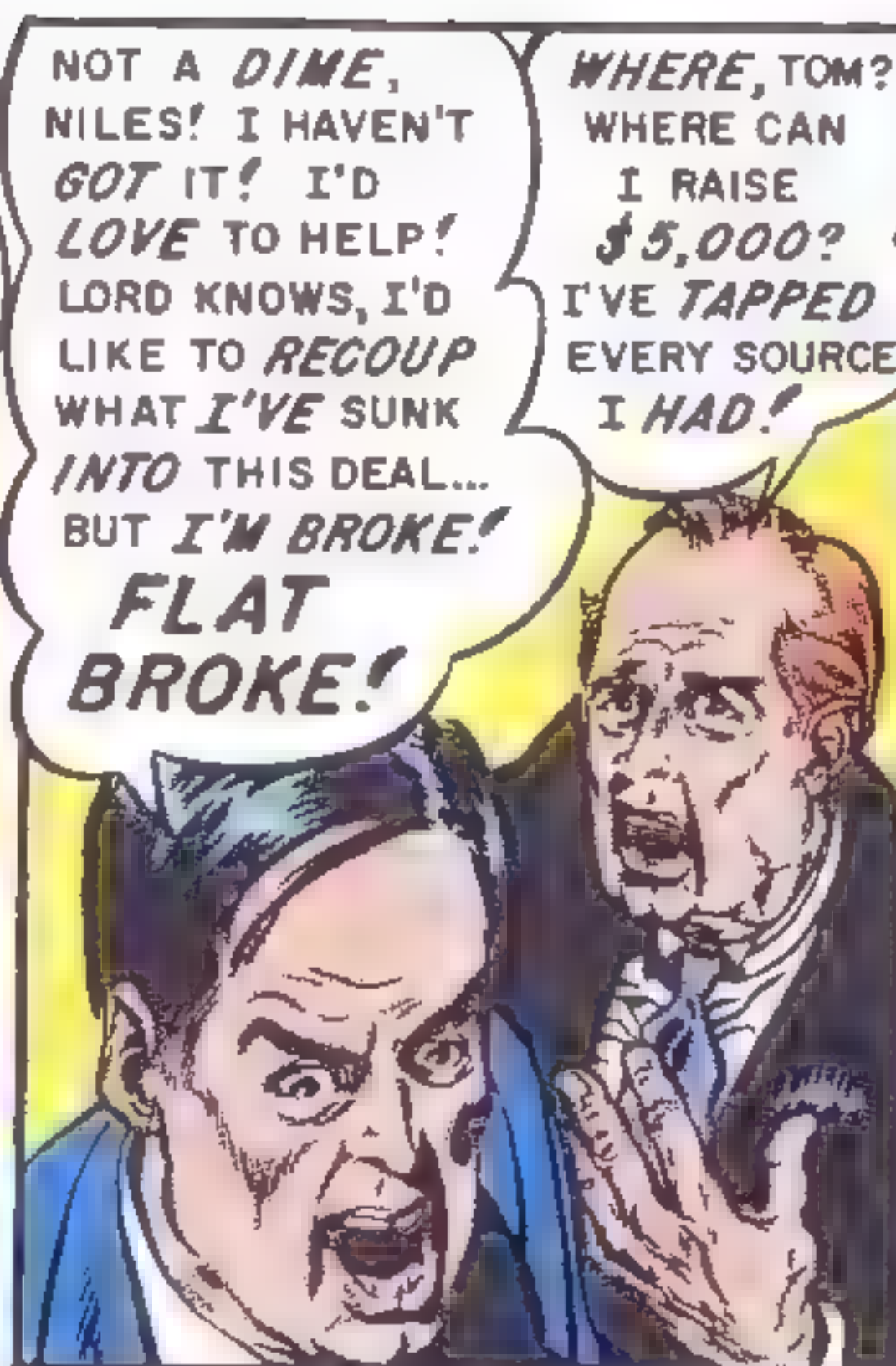
AND YOU SAY THAT \$5,000 COULD TIDE ME OVER...?





\$5000 COULD SWING IT! YOU COULD ESTABLISH CREDIT ONCE MORE... FILL THAT GOVERNMENT ORDER... AND YOU'D BE IN BUSINESS AGAIN!

TOM, I KNOW YOU'RE IN THIS FOR ABOUT **\$15,000**... BUT... COULDN'T YOU POSSIBLY...?



NOT A DIME, NILES! I HAVEN'T GOT IT! I'D LOVE TO HELP! LORD KNOWS, I'D LIKE TO RECOUP WHAT I'VE SUNK INTO THIS DEAL... BUT I'M BROKE! **FLAT BROKE!**

WHERE, TOM? WHERE CAN I RAISE **\$5,000**? I'VE TAPPED EVERY SOURCE I HAD!



I DON'T KNOW, NILES! I JUST DON'T KNOW!

THEN IT'S PRISON AND RUIN FOR ME...

THE ACCOUNTANT, TOM KELTON, NODDED...

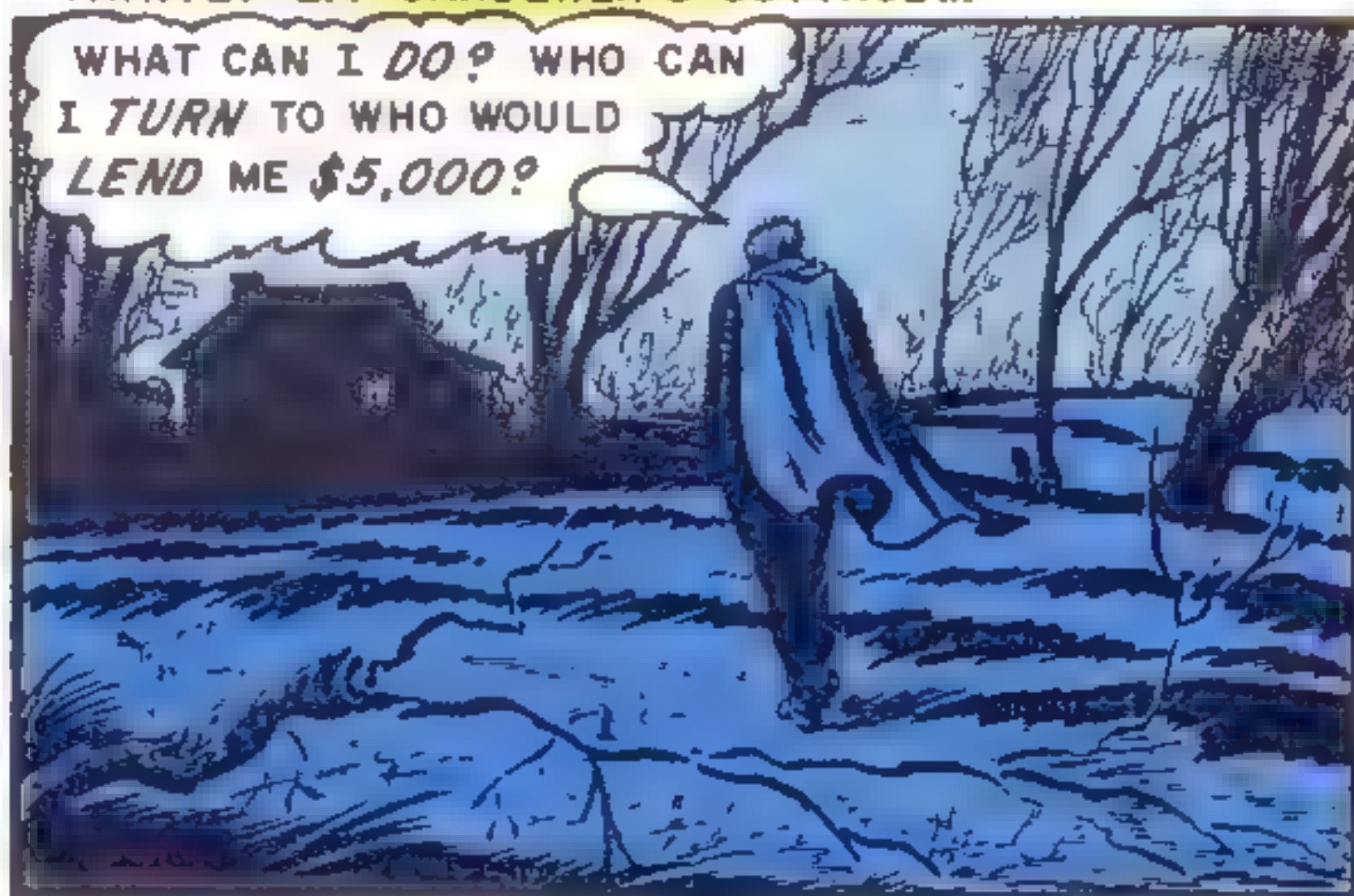
THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT, NILES. AND FIFTEEN GRAND OF MY DOUGH GOES DOWN THE DRAIN. ISN'T THERE ANYBODY, TOM? ANYBODY YOU KNOW WHO COULD LEND YOU FIVE GRAND?

NO ONE, TOM! NOT A SOUL!



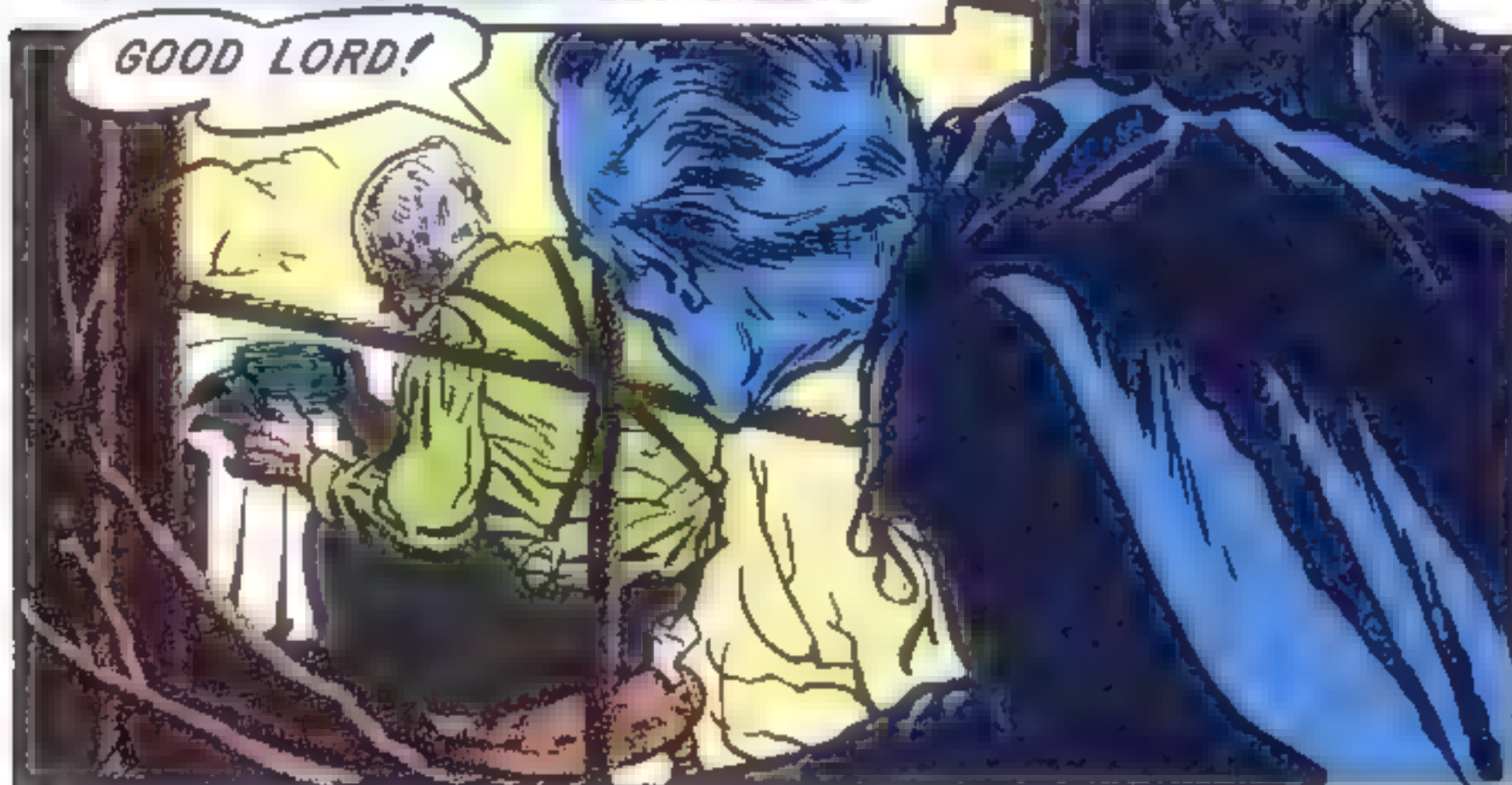
IT WAS ON THAT ONE PARTICULAR NIGHT THAT NILES FAIRCHILD, FACING THE SHAME OF A BUSINESS FAILURE AND A JAIL TERM, WANDERED OUT ONTO HIS WIND-SWEPT GROUNDS AND ABSENTLY APPROACHED THE FAINTLY-LIT GARDENER'S COTTAGE...

WHAT CAN I DO? WHO CAN I TURN TO WHO WOULD LEND ME **\$5,000**?



THE STARS WERE COLD AND THE MOON WAS COLD AND THE TREES GRUNTED AND SWAYED, WHISPERING WITH THE WIND. AND NILES FAIRCHILD PASSED OLD JASPER'S DINGY COTTAGE AND LOOKED THROUGH THE UNCURTAINED WINDOW, AND HE SAW THE OLD MAN COUNTING THE NEAT STACK OF WRINKLED BILLS...

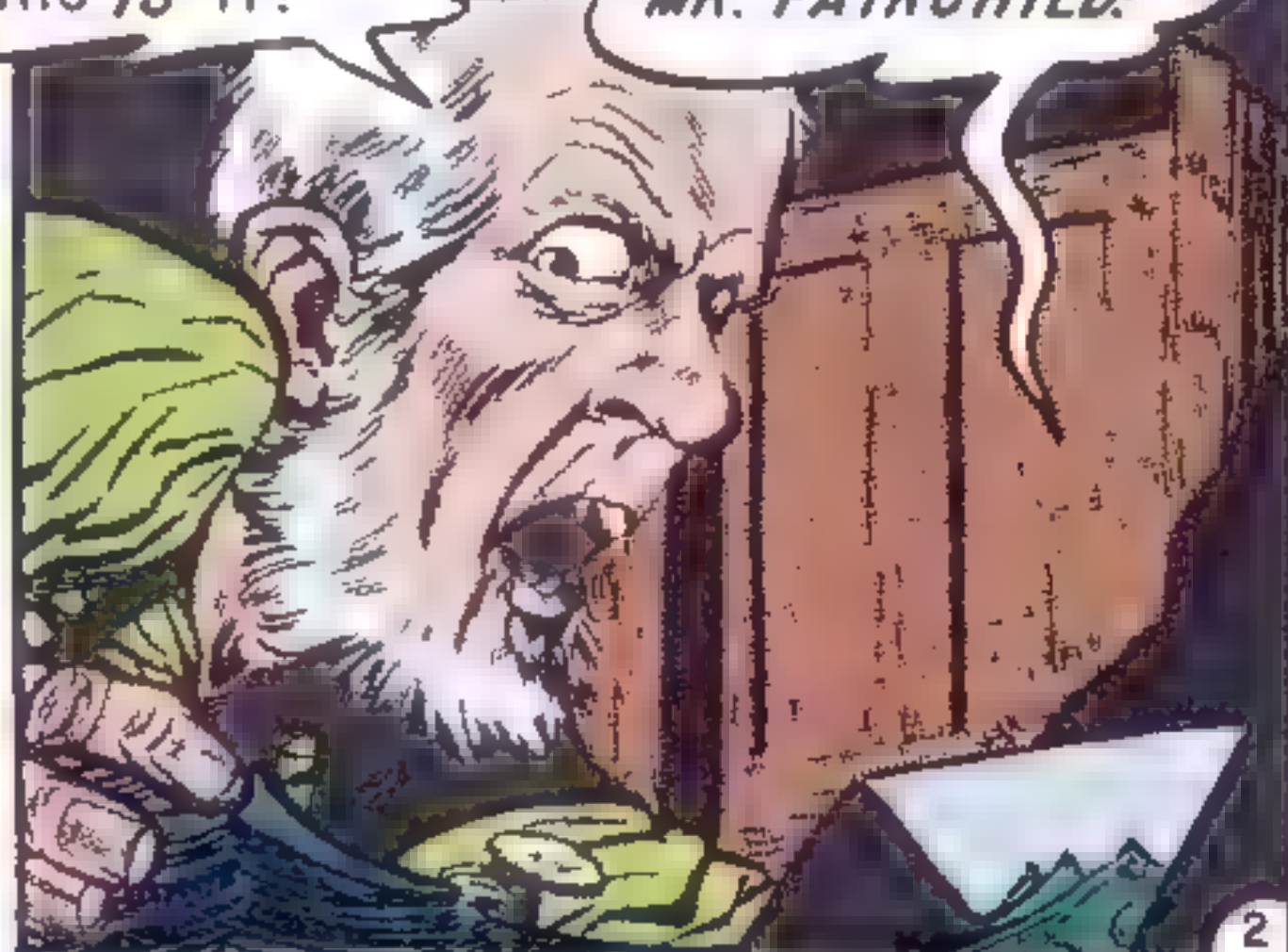
OLD JASPER STARTED AS THE HEAVY KNOCKING ECHOED THROUGH HIS CABIN. WHO COULD THAT BE THIS TIME OF NIGHT? WHO WOULD VISIT HIM... A LOWLY GARDENER? HE HID THE MONEY HASTILY...



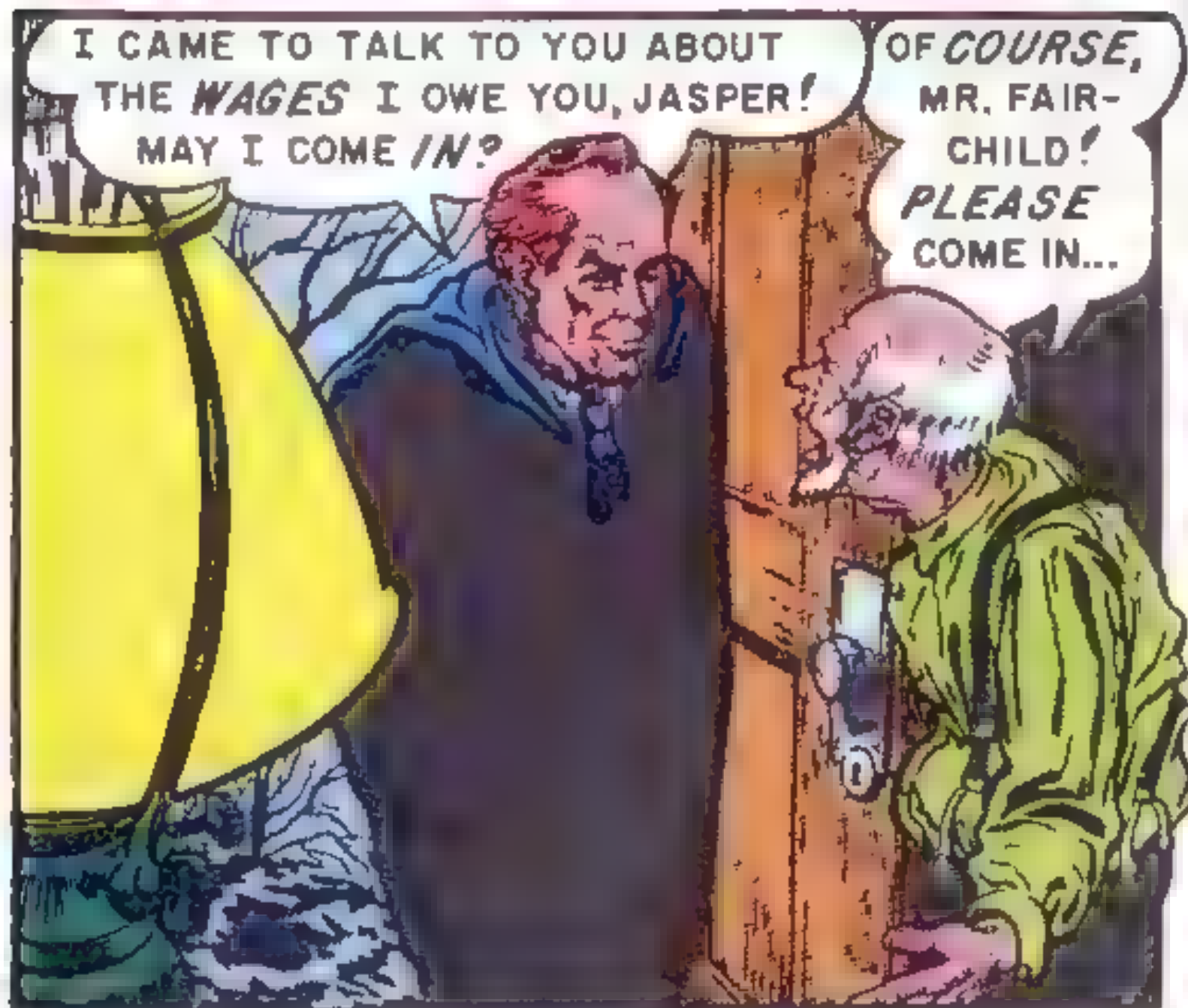
GOOD LORD!

JUST A MINUTE! WHO... WHO IS IT?

IT'S ME, JASPER! MR. FAIRCHILD!



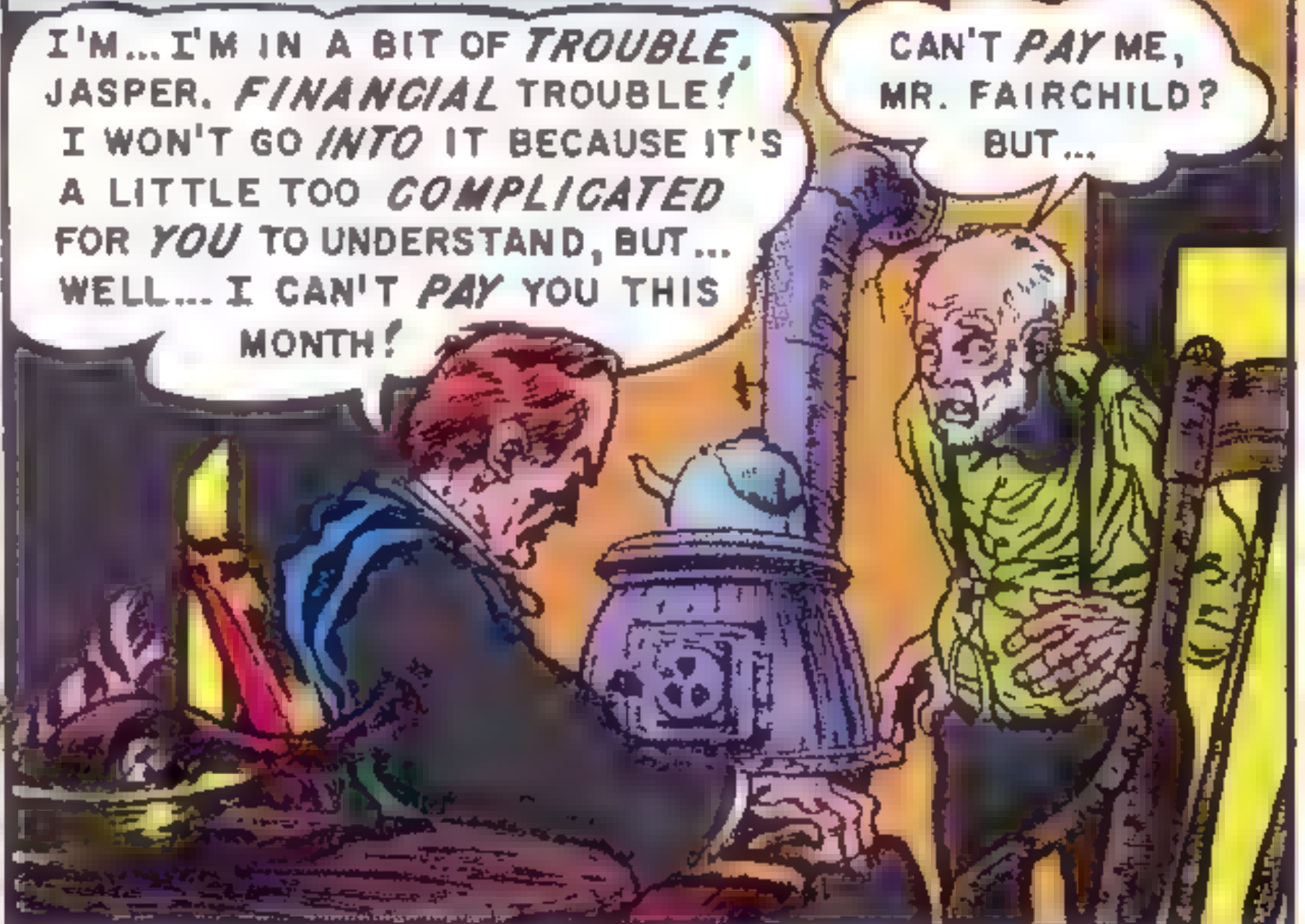
THE OLD MAN SWUNG THE DOOR WIDE. MR. FAIRCHILD SMILED DOWN AT HIM...



I CAME TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE *WAGES* I OWE YOU, JASPER! MAY I COME *IN*?

OF COURSE, MR. FAIRCHILD! PLEASE COME IN...

NILES FAIRCHILD'S GLANCE DARTED AROUND THE DIMLY LIT COTTAGE. THE MONEY WAS GONE...HIDDEN. HE SAT DOWN. HE WEIGHED HIS WORDS CAREFULLY...



I'M... I'M IN A BIT OF *TROUBLE*, JASPER. *FINANCIAL* TROUBLE! I WON'T GO *INTO* IT BECAUSE IT'S A LITTLE TOO *COMPLICATED* FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND, BUT... WELL... I CAN'T *PAY* YOU THIS MONTH!

CAN'T *PAY* ME, MR. FAIRCHILD? BUT...

IN FACT, JASPER, I FACE *BANKRUPTCY*... *RUIN*... AND A POSSIBLE *JAIL* SENTENCE IF I DON'T RAISE \$5,000 WITHIN THE *NEXT FEW DAYS*...

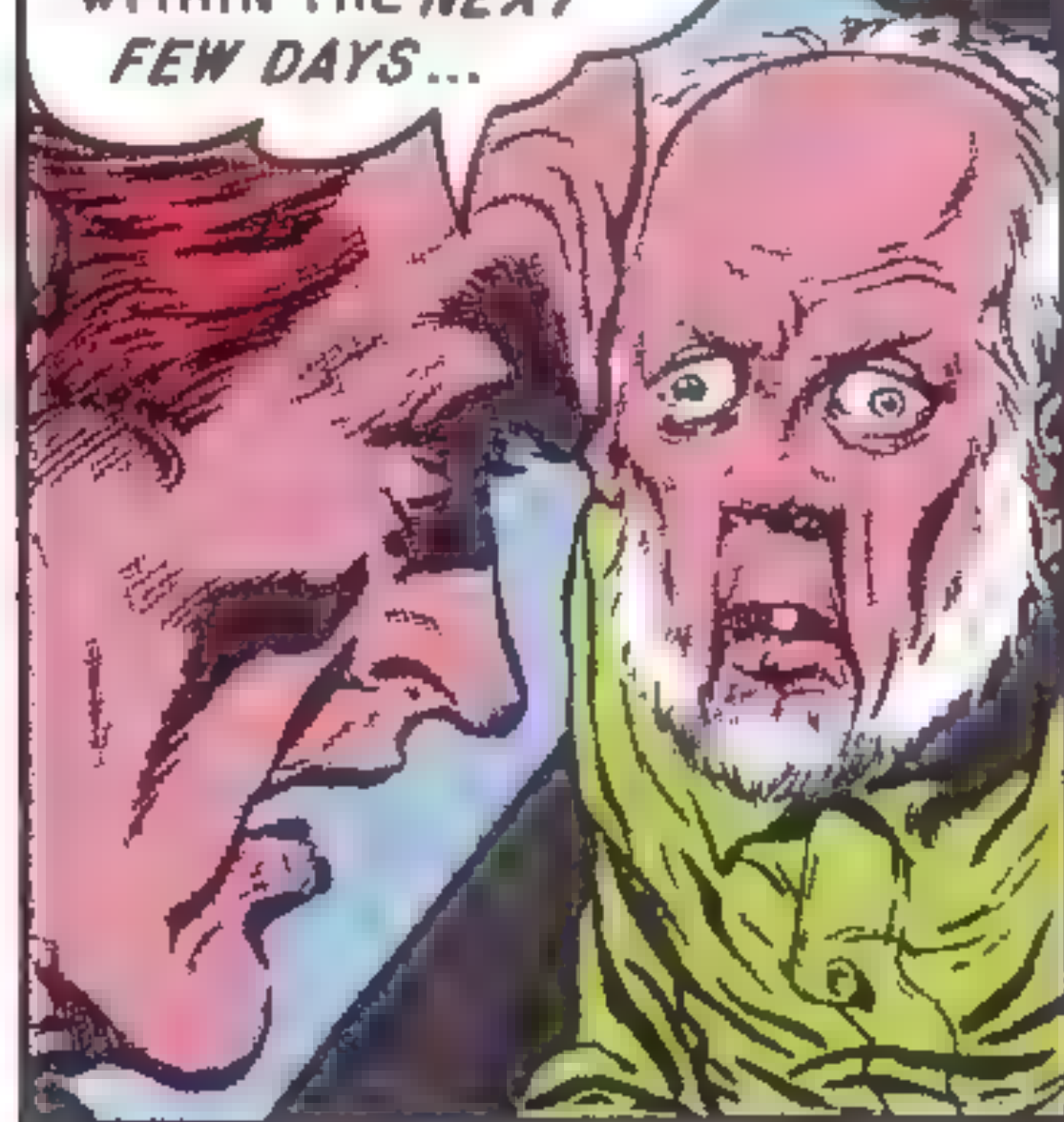
\$5000. THAT'S A LOT OF *MONEY*!

LEND IT TO ME, JASPER! I *BEG* OF YOU! I *KNOW* YOU HAVE IT. I SAW YOU *COUNTING* IT! PLEASE LEND IT TO ME!

NO! NO!

IT CAN *SAVE* ME, JASPER! YOU'LL GET IT *BACK*... ALL OF IT... I *SWEAR* IT!

NO! I'VE SAVED ALL MY *LIFE* TO GET THAT *MONEY*! I *WON'T* GIVE IT UP *NOW*. I'M *OLD*! I'LL BE *NEEDING* IT *SOON*!

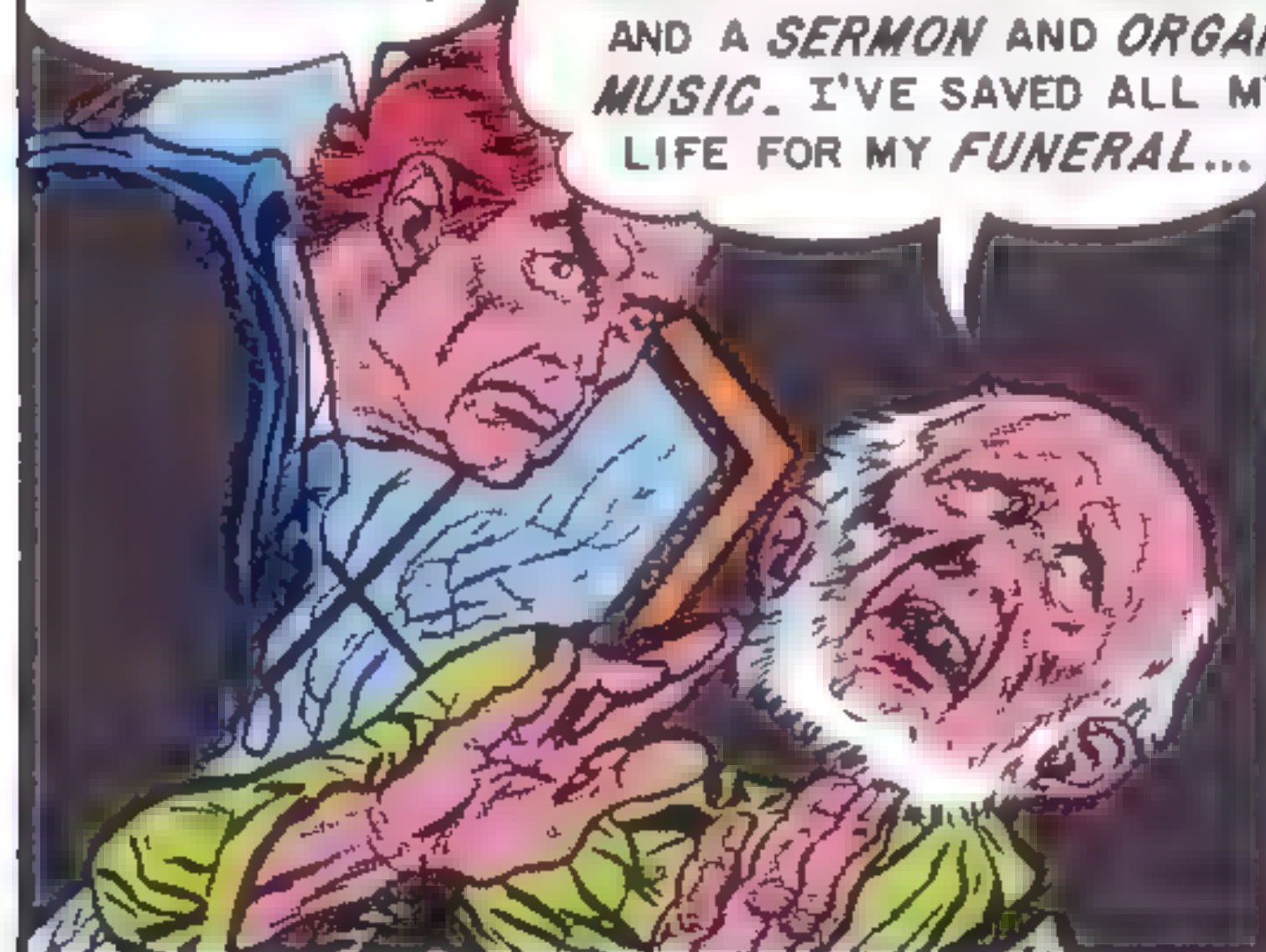


FOR *WHAT*? WHAT WOULD AN OLD MAN WANT WITH THAT KIND OF *MONEY*?

A *FUNERAL*, MR. FAIRCHILD! A *DIGNIFIED* FUNERAL... WITH *FLOWERS* AND A *SILVER CASKET* AND *PALL-BEARERS* AND A *SERMON* AND *ORGAN MUSIC*. I'VE SAVED ALL MY *LIFE* FOR MY *FUNERAL*...

MY *GOD*, MAN! WHAT *GOOD* IS A BIG *FUNERAL* TO YOU... *AFTER* YOU'RE *DEAD*?

YOU DON'T *UNDERSTAND*, MR. FAIRCHILD! YOU *COULDN'T*! BUT I REMEMBER MY *FATHER'S* FUNERAL... AND MY *MOTHER'S* FUNERAL...



OLD JASPER WENT TO THE WINDOW. HE POINTED OUT INTO THE HOWLING NIGHT...

MY FATHER WAS GARDENER HERE BEFORE ME. HE NEVER HAD ANY MONEY. NEVER COULD SAVE ANY. WHEN MY MOTHER DIED, SHE WAS BURIED OUT THERE...

FAR ACROSS THE FAIRCHILD ESTATE, THE WIND TOSSED LEAVES AGAINST A STATELY MARBLE EDIFICE ...THE FAIRCHILD FAMILY CRYPT... THEN SPUN AROUND, AND SKIPPED OVER THE SHABBY GRAVES IN THE SIMPLE LITTLE CEMETERY BESIDE IT...

...OUT THERE...IN YOUR PRIVATE POTTER'S FIELD... YOUR SERVANTS' CEMETERY.

OLD JASPER'S VOICE WAS SAD...LIKE A CHILD WHO'D CRIED TOO LOUD AND TOO LONG...

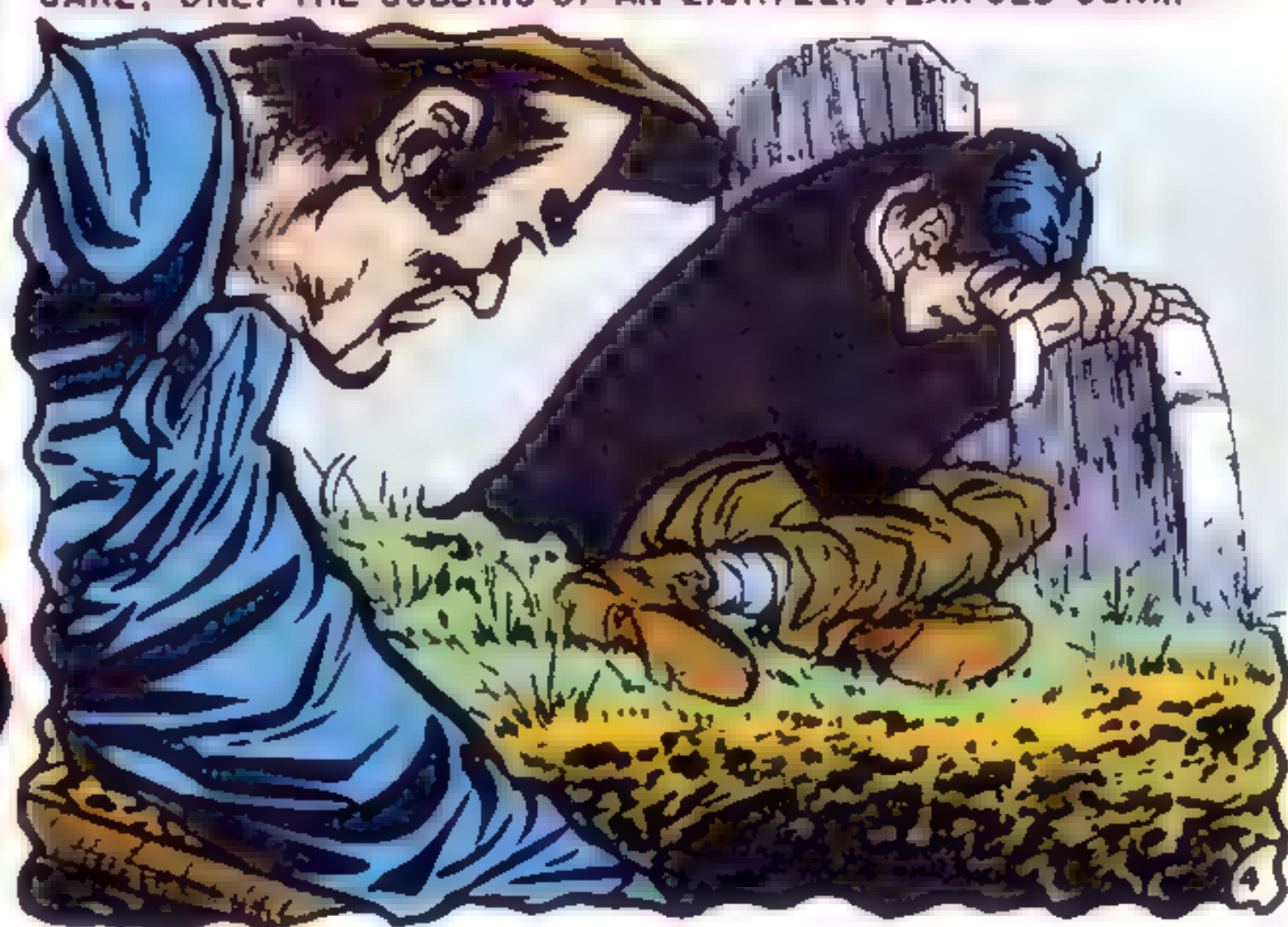
I REMEMBER HOW THEY CAME TO THIS COTTAGE AND LIFTED HER FROM THE BED AND DUMPED HER INTO A PINE BOX AND HAULED IT OUT THERE AND DROPPED IT INTO THE YAWNING HOLE AND FILLED IT UP AND IT WAS ALL OVER. SIMPLE. QUICK. NOTHING.

'AND I REMEMBER HOW I STOOD THERE, AND WATCHED THEM SHOVEL THE SOFT EARTH UPON MY MOTHER'S COFFIN AND HOW I SWORE THAT I WOULD NEVER LET IT HAPPEN TO MY FATHER WHEN HIS TIME CAME ...

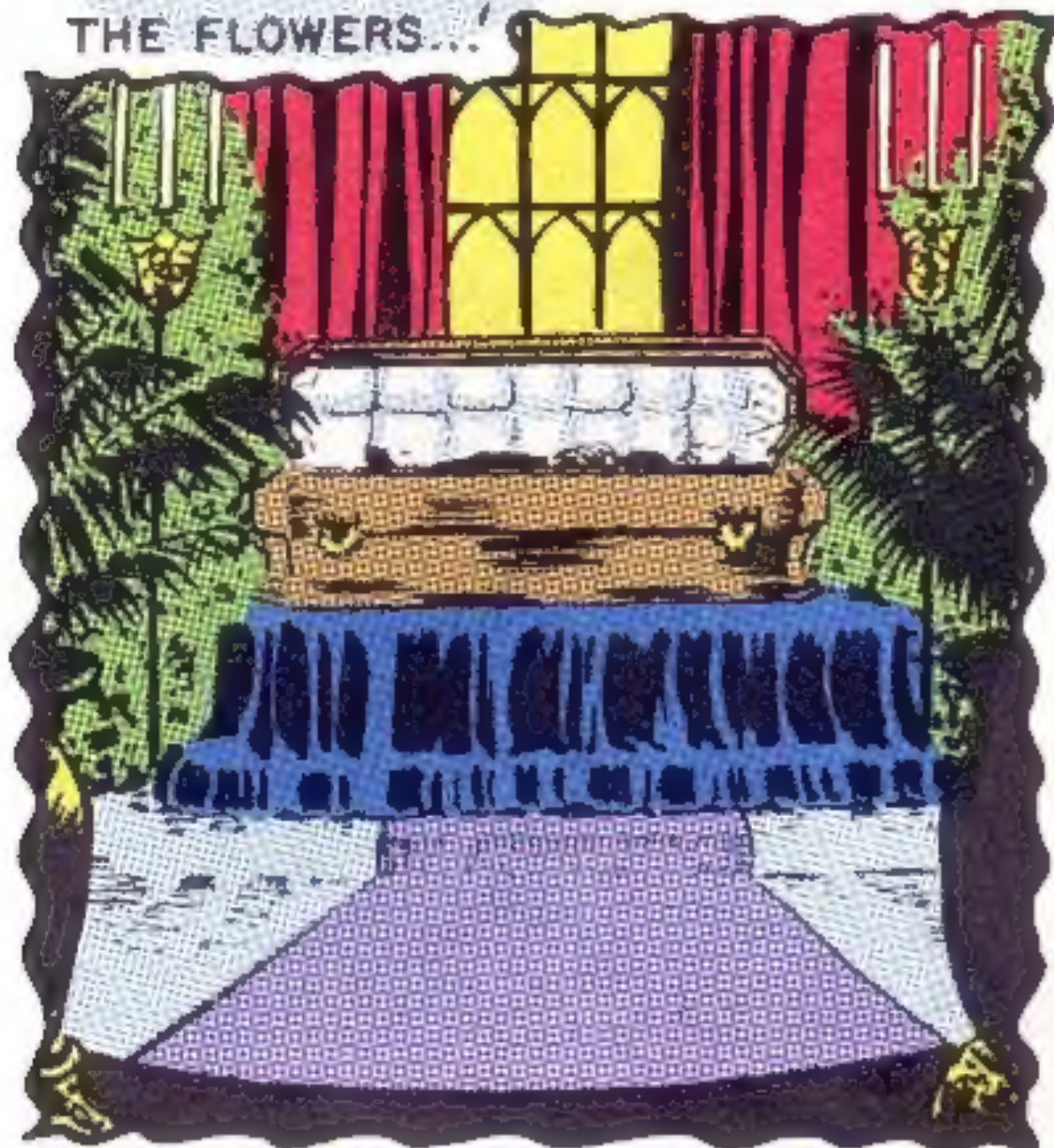
'I WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD THEN. I STARTED TO SAVE. WHEN I WAS EIGHTEEN, I'D RUN ENOUGH ERRANDS AND DID ENOUGH ODD JOBS TO AMASS THE 'HUGE' SUM OF ONE HUNDRED AND SIX DOLLARS. AND THIS MY FATHER FOUND ONE NIGHT...

'AND WENT OUT AND GOT DRUNK AND WAS ROBBED AND MURDERED...'

'AND SO HE, TOO, WAS PUT IN A PLAIN PINE BOX, AND DROPPED IN A HOLE OUT THERE, AND COVERED UP, WITH NO POMP.. NO CARE. ONLY THE SOBBING OF AN EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD SON...'



'YOUR FATHER WAS GOOD ENOUGH TO GIVE ME *MY* FATHER'S *JOB*. I BECAME THE GARDENER. AND ONE DAY YOUR FATHER DIED. YOU WERE ONLY A BOY. WHAT A FUNERAL *HE* HAD. THE COFFIN, LYING IN STATE... THE FLOWERS...



'...THE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE COMING TO THE HOUSE, PASSING THE COFFIN, AND SHEDDING TEARS UPON IT...



'...AND THE SERMON, HIS EULOGY, THE ORGAN MUSIC... THE DIGNITY AND GLORIOUS SOLEMNITY OF IT ALL...



'...THE PALL-BEARERS WITH THEIR WHITE GLOVES CARRYING THE SOLID SILVER CASKET OUT TO THE MARBLE FAMILY CRYPT... THE ORGAN MUSIC DRIFTING OVER THE GROUNDS... THE MOURNERS FOLLOWING... AND I, OFF TO THE SIDE, THINKING OF MY MOTHER'S AND FATHER'S FUNERALS...



AND SO I'VE *SAVED*, MR. FAIRCHILD! I'VE SAVED FOR A *DECENT FUNERAL* OF MY OWN AND I *WON'T* GIVE IT UP, NOT TO *YOU*... NOT TO *ANYBODY*! NO, MR. FAIRCHILD. I *WON'T* LEND YOU MY MONEY. I *WON'T*...

I... I *UNDERSTAND*, JASPER. I'M... *SORRY*...



IT WAS MUCH LATER ON THAT PARTICULAR NIGHT THAT TWO FIGURES MOVED ACROSS THE FAIRCHILD ESTATE-GROUNDS TO THE GARDENER'S COTTAGE. TWO FIGURES, THAT WHISPERED SOFTLY...

NO ONE *KNOWS* HE HAS THE *MONEY*. HE'S OLD, IT WILL LOOK LIKE A *HEART-ATTACK*...

AND *WE'LL* BE OFF THE *HOOK*. YOU'LL BE ABLE TO *STRAIGHTEN THINGS OUT* AND I'LL BE ABLE TO *RECOUP MY \$15,000*.



THE PILLOW CAME CRASHING DOWN ON OLD JASPER'S FACE... SNUFFING OUT THE AIR... SNUFFING OUT HIS LIFE...

HE'S... *DEAD!*

I'VE GOT THE *MONEY*. LET'S GO...



AND SO, LIKE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER BEFORE HIM... HIS DEATH CERTIFICATE SIGNED BY A DISINTERESTED DOCTOR THAT HAD BEEN HASTILY SUMMONED... OLD JOSEPH WAS PLACED IN A SIMPLE PINE BOX, CARRIED OUT TO THE SERVANT-PLOT, AND BURIED WITHOUT FLOWERS, WITHOUT MUSIC, WITHOUT POMP OR DIGNITY. AND NILES FAIRCHILD AND TOM KELTON STOOD BY, SMILING...



AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED, NILES FAIRCHILD WAS ABLE TO REESTABLISH HIS CREDIT, FILL THE GOVERNMENT ORDER, AND START THE LONG CLIMB BACK UP THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS-LADDER. ONE NIGHT, MONTHS LATER...

THAT'S IT, NILES... THE *FIRST BLACK-INKED ENTRY!* YOU'RE *ALL CLEAR!* I CAME OVER TONIGHT TO *SHOW IT TO YOU!* I *KNEW* YOU'D BE *THRILLED!*

I *AM*, TOM. *THANKS.* HOW ABOUT A *DRINK...* IN *CELEBRATION.*



OUTSIDE THE FAIRCHILD MANSION, OUT IN THE DISMAL UNPRETENTIOUS SERVANT-CEMETERY, BELOW THE SPARSELY-GRASSED MOUNDS, SOMETHING STIRRED... PUSHING UPWARD... CRUMBLING THE SURFACE OF IT'S RECENTLY TAMPED-DOWN GRAVE...



INSIDE, THE TWO MEN DRANK. TOM KELTON TURNED TO GO...

GOOD-NIGHT, NILES.

NIGHT, TOM.



THE THING STUMBLED ACROSS THE LAWNS, TOTTERING IN THE WIND, LIFTING ITS MAGGOT-COVERED HEAD, LISTENING...

SEE YOU IN THE MORNING.

SURE THING...



NILES FAIRCHILD CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND TOM KELTON AND RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY. AS HE OPENED THE DOOR, THE STENCH OF ROTTED FLESH AND GRAVE-SLIME SEARED HIS NOSTRILS...

WHAT THE...? WHO'S IN HERE? WHO...?



THE THING MOVED FROM THE SHADOWS INTO THE LIGHT. NILES FAIRCHILD SAW IT... SAW THE CRAWLING DECAYING CORPSE... SAW THE BITS OF DEAD FLESH FALLING AWAY... THE WHITENED BONE PROTRUDING THROUGH...

NO! NO! OH, LORD...



... AND NILES FAIRCHILD SCREAMED...

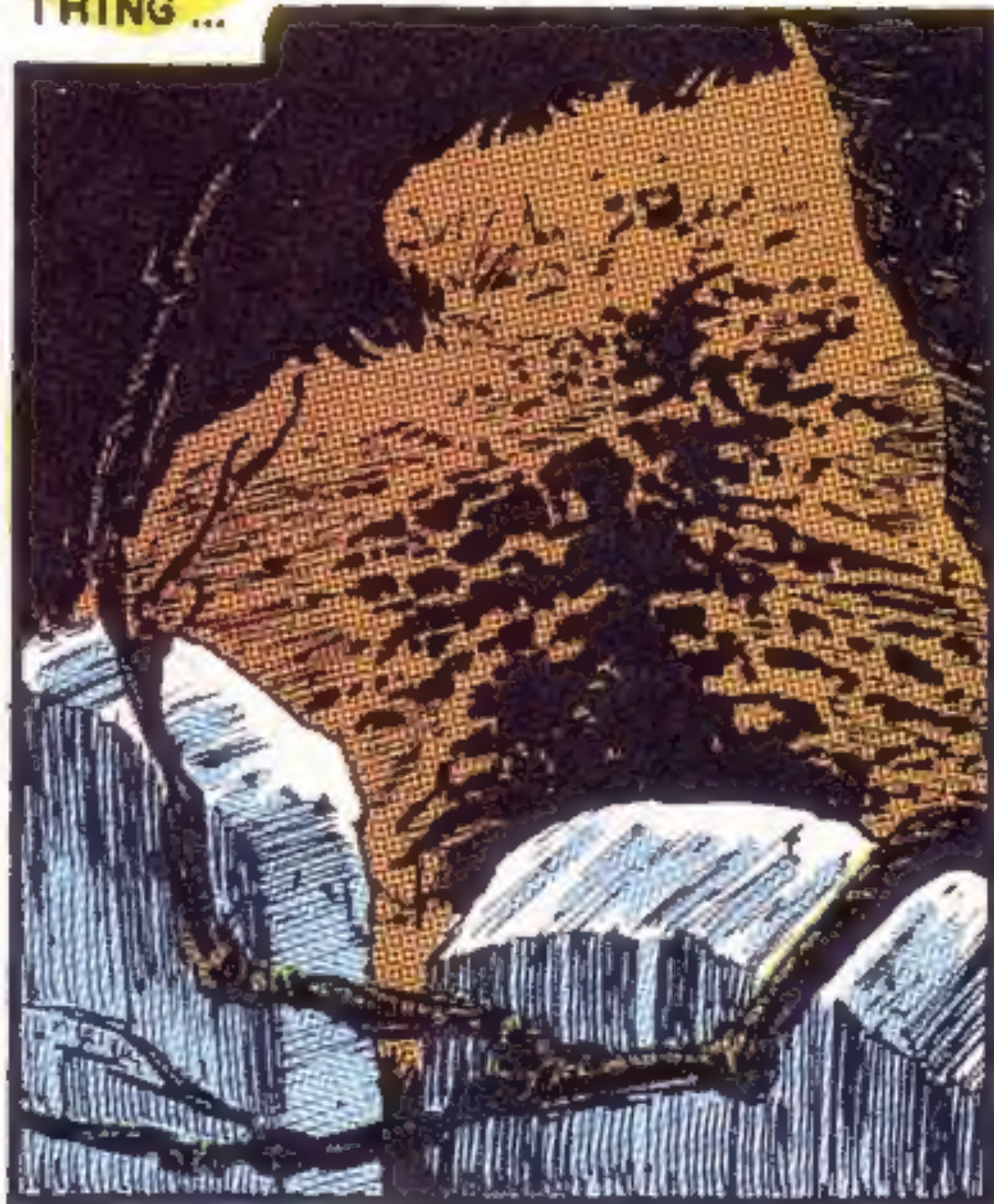
THE POLICE, SUMMONED BY THE SERVANTS, FOUND THE BEATEN BLOODY BODY OF NILES FAIRCHILD LYING ON THE LIBRARY FLOOR...

MR. KELTON
SAW HIM
LAST...

MR. KELTON
DID IT...

TOM KELTON WAS ARRESTED. HE HAD NO DEFENSE. HE'D BEEN THERE. HE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE LITTLE GRAVE OUT IN THE SERVANT-CEMETERY THAT HAD OPENED AND CLOSED THAT NIGHT...

THE SAME LITTLE GRAVE THAT OPENED ONCE MORE THE NIGHT BEFORE NILES FAIRCHILD'S CLOSED-COFFIN FUNERAL SERVICES WERE HELD... OPENED, YAWNING TO ERUPT THE THING...



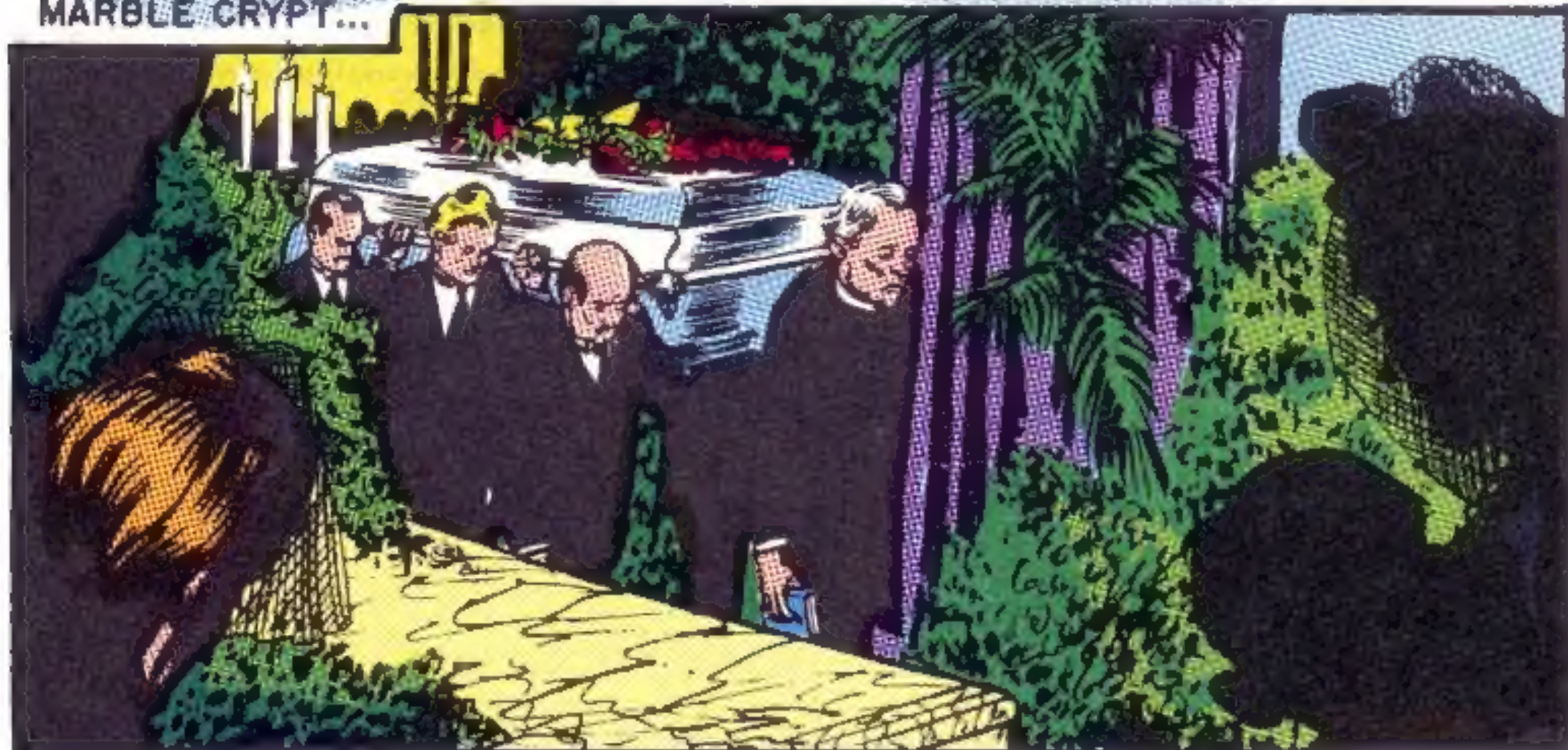
THE THING TOTTERED ACROSS THE GROUNDS...INTO THE HOUSE...TO THE SOLID SILVER COFFIN...PUSHED OPEN THE LID...



...AND CARRIED THE BODY OF NILES FAIRCHILD BACK TO THE SERVANT-CEMETERY...TO THE OPEN GRAVE...AND DROPPED IT IN...



THE NEXT DAY, THE MOURNERS GATHERED. THE FLOWERS FILLED THE MANSION-ROOM WITH THEIR SWEET SCENT. THE ORGAN MUSIC DRIFTED THROUGH THE HOUSE. THE EULOGY WAS SPOKEN. THE PALL-BEARERS LIFTED THE SOLID SILVER COFFIN. THE REMAINS OF *OLD JASPER MILLIKEN, GARDENER*, WERE CARRIED OUT AND LAID TO REST IN THE MARBLE CRYPT...



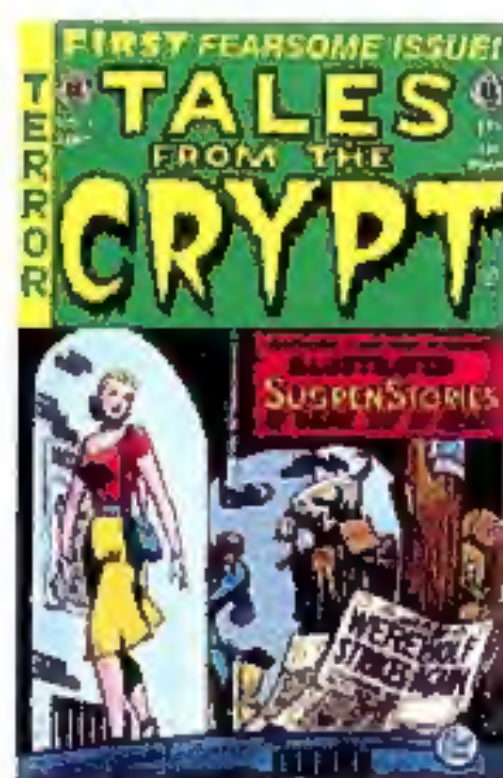
HEE, HEE! SO JASPER GOT THE FUNERAL HE'D ALWAYS WANTED. HE WAS SO *HAPPY* HE DIDN'T EVEN *MIND* THAT EVERY TIME THEY *MENTIONED* THE DEAR DEPARTED, THEY *REFERRED* TO HIM AS *NILES*. AS FOR TOM KELTON...WELL, HE'S *STILL* DOING *ACCOUNTING WORK*...A-COUNTING WITH CHALK-MARKS ON HIS *CELL WALL* THE DAYS LEFT TILL HE HAS TO *SIT IN THE HOT-SEAT*. HEE, HEE. 'BYE, NOW.

WE'LL ALL
SEE YOU NEXT
IN *MY MAG*,
THE HAUNT
OF FEAR!



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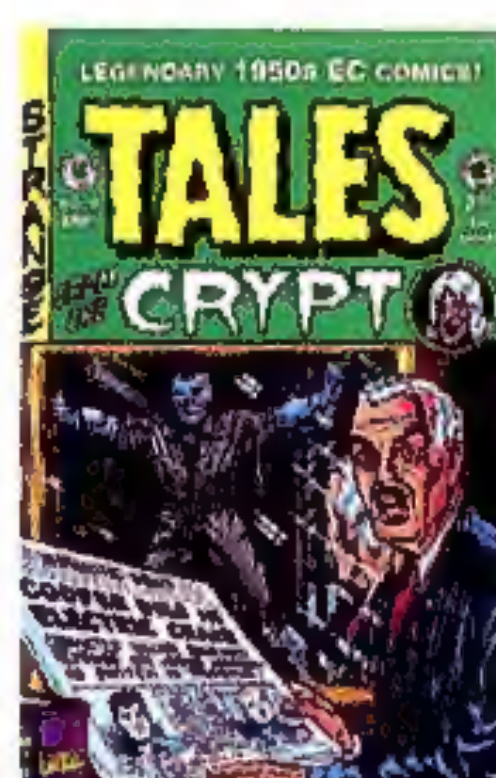
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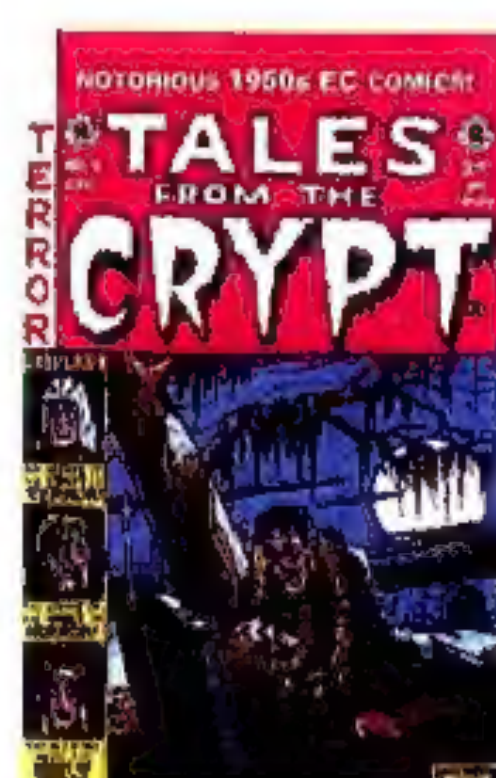
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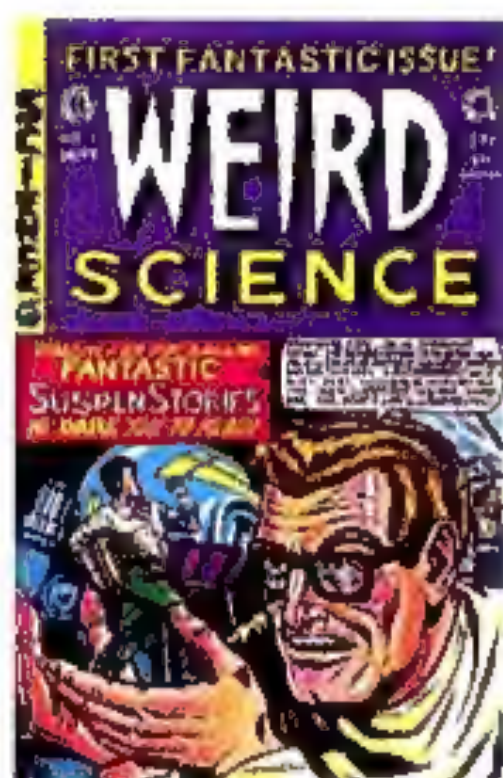
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CRYPT #5



CRYPT #6



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W SCI #2



W SCI #3



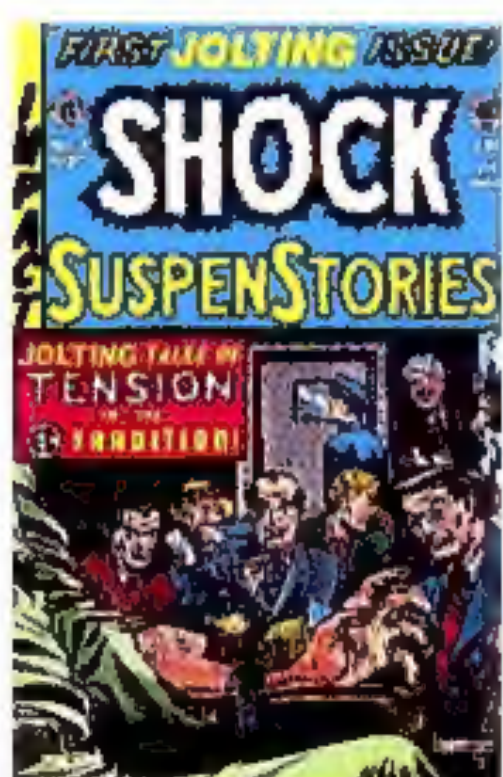
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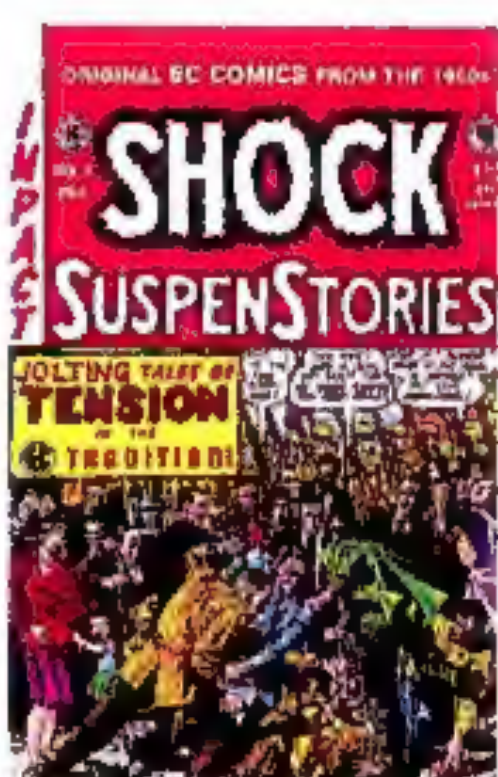
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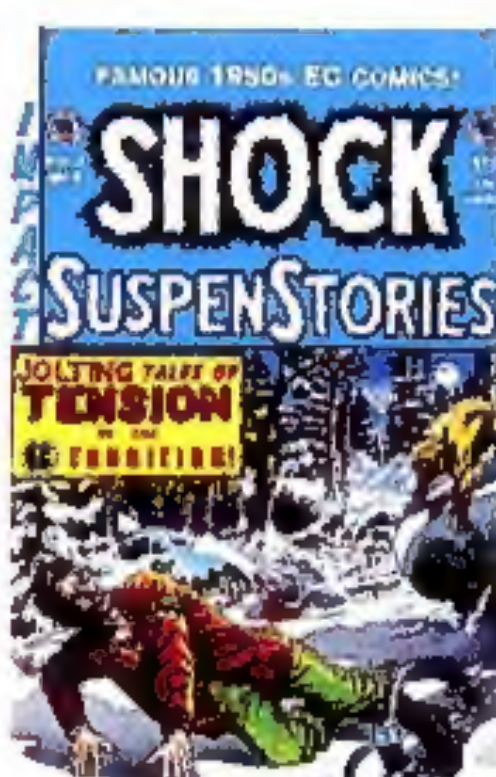
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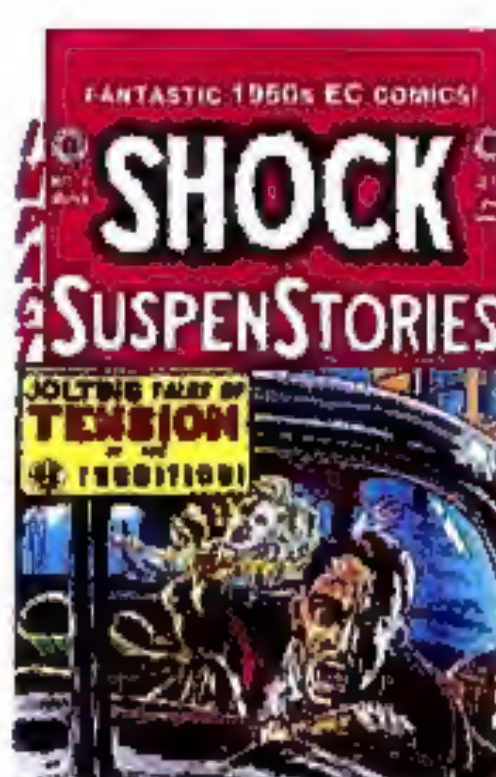
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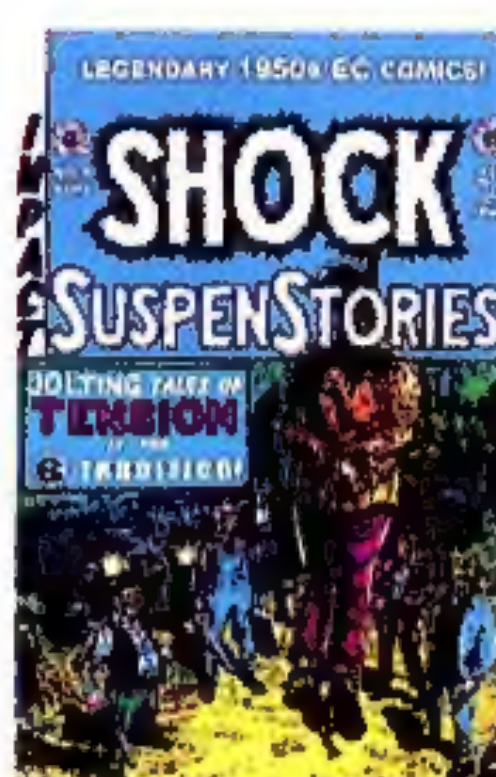
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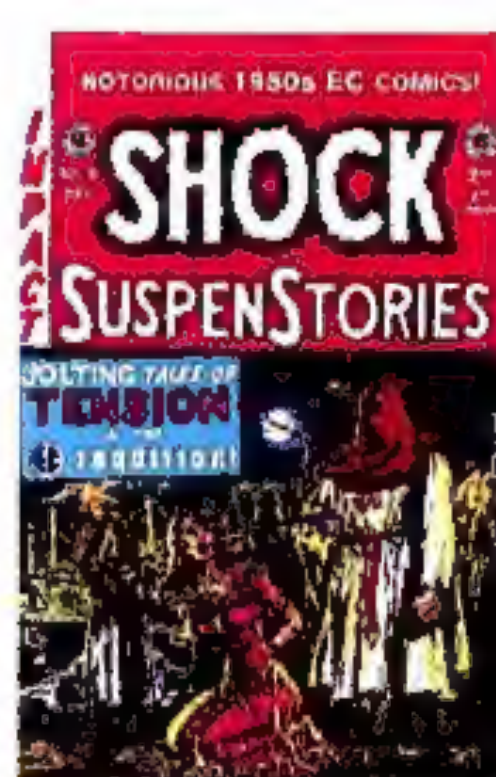
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